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MISS SYLVESTER'S MARRIAGE

By Cecil Charles

THE innumerable tucks in the sleeves of her chiffon bodice appeared to fascinate the dark foreigner; he bent over her constantly. The music went on vaguely, murmurously, and the chiffon seemed to float in time to its rhythm. She was an uncommon figure, with an airiness and grace altogether charming. Her throat and neck were smooth and delicate, but not fragile; her arms were beyond criticism; her skin had a satiny gloss, striking in contrast with her black hair and dark eyes; her eyebrows were straight and her lashes long and fine; her nose was as perfect as Psyche's and her mouth tropical. Her gown was yellow, and she wore a pearl or two, being a young lady of taste as well as a niece of Mrs. Sevenbanks and a daughter of the late Francis Sylvester, Esq.

The foreigner was not the only one susceptible to the influence of her chiffon aura; a couple of average young dancing men, dallying in the doorway, exchanged consoling confidences.

"Nerve? Well, rather. Not the girl's fault. Where is the old lady?"

"The old lady has got hold of old Clifford. Awfully good sort of chaperon! But who is the freak, you know? Has a Philippine sort of look. One never knows what to expect in this house."

"Clayton affects oddities because he thinks it English form. He will keep on as long as he dares. When he goes too far people will show him they are bored, and he will have to—" he paused, glancing over his shoulder.

The voice that made him pause was perfect in modulation. "The poor child finds it dull. Stepping from the carriage she turned her ankle. I wanted to drive back at once, but she insisted it was nothing. Of course she is not dancing."

The young men receded from the doorway with grace. Mrs. Sevenbanks was non-irritant, non-astringent; her gowns moderate, her diamonds small and her bloneness never florid. Her delicate encouragement of Clifford, the well-preserved old bachelor Assembly authority, was like fine gauze against the firm neutrality of her nine-year-old half-mourning. She was never anything less than that cool, calm, considerate creation of circumstance known dimly to the *polloi* without the pale as the society leader. She had a smile for the receding young men, and then her gaze fell on Miss Sylvester and the ponderous individual of dark complexion.

She put up her glass for an instant and put it down again. There was no movement of her brows as she spoke in a low tone, "Alma!" But the girl heard and rose. With a little catch of breath she said, "I must go to my aunt. It has been pleasant to hear you speak of my native land." Then she moved forward slowly, as if walking hurt her.

The man did not follow; he stood looking after her with intent black eyes, like one unaccustomed to ball-rooms and unsure of what he should do.

Mrs. Sevenbanks paid no attention to him, but spoke to her niece:

"You are looking pale. I think I should take you home."

"Very well," said Miss Sylvester, "I am quite ready."

As she passed through the doorway she turned and glanced back at her late companion, who replied to this attention with a very low bow, his hand on his heart. The bending of his body in this particular manner had something grotesque in it. Mrs. Sevenbanks made no allusion to him until her old friend Clifford had placed them in a carriage and they were being driven home. Then, pleasantly enough, she inquired: "And who was that peculiar person, Alma, with whom you were talking?"

"It was a South American gentleman, Aunt Louise."

"A gentleman? I thought he hardly knew how to act. I fancied . . . these — detectives, you know. Still, it was not such a crush. . . . What a remarkable way of bowing! I should call him an amusing character. I wonder how he came to be at the dance."

"I suppose they asked him." The girl spoke half-pettishly. "He has not amused me at all. He has made me sad—and sick of this country."

"You surprise me—though I suppose I ought not to be surprised, for I have heard you say something of the kind before. If you longed for Paris or London . . . but to leave civilization and go down there among the savages—"

"You forget, Aunt Louise, that I was born down there among the savages."

"Oh, no, I do not forget that. But you were educated for the most part in the United States, and after all, you are an American."

"Anyway," said Miss Sylvester, "I hate New York! I can't breathe in it—there's something stifling!" She threw herself forward and held her face to the open window of the carriage. Stars were faintly visible in the sky where it was clear of clouds. It was a still night early in April; there was no breeze. In a moment, as if impatient of their slow

progress homeward, she fell back against the cushions.

"Does your ankle pain you very much?" her aunt inquired, kindly. "I am sorry I did not insist on going home sooner. It should have been bathed at once with arnica."

"I had almost forgotten it," said the girl. "General"—she pronounced it with the Spanish *g*—"da Veiga was telling me stories of fearful wars."

"Hennyrrall? is that a Christian name?" Mrs. Sevenbanks was not an intentional aggravator, but she had a way of ignoring anything South American—even a Spanish pronunciation.

"It is a military title," Alma explained, languidly, though with no tone of disrespect. "Something higher than colonel. He is an exile now."

"You refer to that very dark, very large man?" Mrs. Sevenbanks persisted. "He is not—of another race, then?"

"I did not ask him if he was of another race," said Miss Sylvester, closing her eyes.

The carriage had turned into an avenue and rolled more easily on asphalt. It was less of an effort to converse, and Mrs. Sevenbanks still had something to say. "You are not asleep, Alma?"

"No."

"To-morrow, when your Aunt Ester Harding arrives—it is to-morrow she comes, I think?"

"Yes, it is to-morrow. If she comes in the morning I shall probably be out. I have promised Alice Dow to go out with her. But then Aunt Ester may want a little chat with you."

The carriage had stopped. Mrs. Sevenbanks uttered a sound like a very faint sigh as they went up the steps and were admitted by the automatic servant. "There is rather a bright light," she said. "I think your Aunt Ester may have already arrived."

Back where the severity of the drawing-room melted into artistic

corners and a five-o'clock-tea nook the lights were certainly brilliant. The tea table was drawn up by the side of the widest and most comfortable chair, in which reposed a lady, her tremendously arched Spanish feet in their tremendously high-heeled boots resting on the handsomest and costliest cushion she had been able to find in the room. As Mrs. Sevenbanks and Alma came in, domino-like in their shimmering opera cloaks, she sprang up with a cry like a child's: "I am here, you see; they wanted to send me to bed, but I wouldn't go. I ordered coffee, being half-dead. I came direct from Chicago—the porter of the sleeping car stole my opals—to-morrow I shall enter complaint—and to-morrow I shall have my face steamed and a Turkish bath. Till then I represent Chicago."

"You are looking well," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, embracing her mildly and at once giving place to Alma. "I am glad we returned early. You were very right to order coffee, but I fear it may keep you awake. I know how it would affect me." She smiled, glanced at the black lees in the cup, shivered and glanced back at her guest. "You are looking extremely well," she repeated.

Her private impression that this other aunt of Alma was getting shorter and stouter and of a greasier olive complexion every year, and more and more inclined to gabble and cackle in true Latin-American manner, and more and more addicted to terrible black coffee and violent gestures and loud colors in dress, she was not obliged to express. It was quite her own affair if she chose to consider quarter-Spanish—example, Alma—bad enough, and half-Spanish—example, Alma's Aunt Ester—much too bad. She was glad the visitor had come, for she wanted to talk with her about their niece. Ester Harding also was a widow without encumbrances, and really ought not to shirk her responsibility in the matter.

Miss Sylvester had put off her cloak and was looking into the silver

pot in which the coffee had been brought. "I can't very well have any when there isn't any to have," she mused aloud. Then she sat down on a sofa with both the elder ladies regarding her. Aunt Sevenbanks smiled and was silent; Aunt Harding admired her gown of pale yellow chiffon over silk.

"You were at a ball?" said Aunt Harding. "How could you come away so soon? And with such a dress! Weren't the young men all wild to dance with you?"

"Oh, in New York, Aunt Ester? I thought you were up to date. Perhaps if I were married someone might take a fancy to me. However, it doesn't matter much. I don't fancy any of them. There is something so 'painful-duty'-like about them. Wild to dance with me! Why, if they had a lot of little pink angels down from Paradise——"

"Alma," requested Mrs. Sevenbanks, "be moderate."

"Anyway, I hate New York!" the girl went on, exactly as she had spoken in the carriage. "Aunt Ester, do you never long for the old days? Don't you remember the good times we had down there?—the dances at the legation, the balls at the President's palace, the long room with canvased floor and spangles sprinkled over it to make it gay, the old-fashioned chandeliers with thousands of candles, the band that played and played, and the suppers in the balconies, the champagne and all the lovely speeches and the waltz, waltz, waltz, and the *danza* all night long till the sun came up over the mountains! Oh, to go back seven years and have it all over again—at fifteen!"

Mrs. Sevenbanks looked straight before her and made no sound. The suggestion of a fifteen-year-old girl at a ball may have been too appalling. Mrs. Harding, on the other hand, regarded their niece with sympathetic expression. Three consecutive cups of good black coffee had made her eyes shine. She also could remember happy hours under equa-

torial skies—days of sun splendor, nights of star glory.

"It is really tame up here, Aunt Ester," the girl went on. "I don't wonder it broke poor papa's heart when he was recalled. Half the time—I mean six months of the twelve—everything is unreal, artificial—heat and light and everything else. To-night at the Claytons' there was a man just up from the Argentine—exiled from some country—and he was telling me how he got away. It brought back old recollections—especially that last night at the palace—the night before papa got that abominable cablegram from Washington. I could see the lights and hear the mazurka that the band played in the alcove . . ."

"O—oh!" Her Aunt Ester leaned forward with intense black eyes. "You remember that ball? It was fine! You had a good time, I think."

"Of course I did. It was there I danced so much with the attaché from—from Bolivia, with red hair. He came up this way, smiling and romantic—" she rose to illustrate—"and bowed away down, down, down. I don't see how he ever kept his balance. He had been drinking the health of the President of the United States in about twenty cognacs. Then we started off so—la-ah, l'la, l'la, l'la."

The golden sweep of chiffon, the memory of the sensuous music, the familiar motion, seemed suddenly to go to the elder lady's head. She sprang up with a jubilant cry that drew itself out into the continuous toot-tut-toot of horn and clarinet, and in her horribly high-heeled boots she danced.

Mrs. Sevenbanks's gracious mask of sufferance had remained unaltered through all, but presently chancing to turn her eyes away to the door, that lady was visibly startled to observe the butler standing in the arch, his eyes riveted on a Corot on the opposite wall. He had, naturally, seen nothing else. His voice was suave. "Beg pardon, ma'am; shall I remove the coffee things, ma'am?"

And Mrs. Sevenbanks made answer, with carven countenance: "Yes, James, and as we shall retire at once you may wait and put out the lights."

II

MRS. HARDING had had her coffee and was down for late breakfast, English style, when her hostess appeared next morning. Her mood was as cheerful as the elaborate old-rose house gown she wore. She hastened to inform her sister-in-law that Alma had gone out with Alice Dow, "in that reprehensible American fashion, without an older person."

"I desired that she should go without me," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, "for I wished to speak with you about her."

"Why don't you let her get married?" asked Mrs. Harding. "She is twenty-one, isn't she?"

"In her twenty-third year," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, with patient stiffness. She always felt stiff of a morning until after taking her tea. It was a sort of eye-opener that she absolutely required, and except on rare occasions was taken in her own room. This morning was one of the rare occasions. She had slept rather late, and she remembered Mrs. Harding had odd ways of early rising.

"*Ave Maria!*" was Mrs. Harding's next remark. "That is much too old; but you may have found someone you think suitable."

Mrs. Sevenbanks smiled. "I am afraid your visit to Chicago has crowded many things from your memory; for instance, some of Alma's characteristics. You must remember she has Spanish blood in her veins; she is hard to control."

"Of course," said Mrs. Harding; "that is only natural, since her mother, who was my only sister, was the child of a Spanish gentleman and an English lady."

Mrs. Sevenbanks ignored this recital of ancestry. "You know," she urged, mildly, "you and I are alike responsible."

"But what do you expect me to do?" cried Mrs. Harding. "I have no settled home—I am on the wing. Do you wish me to take her with me to Paris—or Caracas? I am not sure to which place I shall go next. It would be easier to marry her off in Caracas."

Mrs. Sevenbanks shuddered. "I could hardly consent to that. Alma is an American, and should marry one of her own countrymen."

"One of these Yankees—these pale-eyed, white-blooded egotists? My husband was at least an Englishman."

Mrs. Sevenbanks reflected. The tea was beginning to take effect; she would soon feel able to smile. "Shall you mind if I speak very frankly?" she asked.

"Oh, you always do that."

"Well, then, my dear friend, my idea is that we have hardly coöperated as we should in this matter. Alma has certainly given me some bad moments of late. She is of age, and at any time can act according to her own judgment, or rather impulse. Were it not for her birth and breeding I should feel actual terror when she displays capricious and erratic ways, describing the life she led in that barbarous South American republic, and disparaging the United States. I often think it a misfortune that my brother ever went down there—apart from the terrible injustice of his being recalled. I do not refer to anything connected with his marriage, for of course your sister Dolores was a lovely woman. But it does seem as if there were a fatal fascination for some persons in the first taste of that wild and lawless life."

"Perhaps you wouldn't think it so lawless if you lived there a while," said Mrs. Harding. "There is plenty of law."

"Yes? But you understand what I mean. . . . What I was going to say . . . last night at the Claytons'—you certainly know who the Claytons are? I am speaking now in confidence—I should not like her to suppose I remarked it—last night Alma sat out at least two dances talk-

ing to a dark-skinned, large, odd-looking man, a General Somebody or other, she tells me, but most unrepresentable and awkward."

"I thought she sat out the dances because her ankle was hurt."

"But there were others—the right kind of men—that she might have talked to. Besides, her ankle was not so bad or she would not have felt so cheerful when we returned home."

"Cheerful! Oh, you mean because we were dancing and singing?"

Mrs. Sevenbanks was silent. A very faint pink tinged her face. She remembered how the butler had stood in the doorway.

"And this large, dark somebody or other," suggested Mrs. Harding—"perhaps he is very rich."

Mrs. Sevenbanks sighed. "I doubt it. I believe she said he was an exile."

"Exiles sometimes carry away millions with them. You are afraid she has fallen in love with him?"

"In love?" repeated Mrs. Sevenbanks, with a shudder. "I doubt if the man be not some half-breed. Our new possessions are responsible for these alarming evidences."

"Part Indian, you mean? But if he is so unattractive, what do you fear?"

Mrs. Sevenbanks compressed her lips. "Ugly men fascinate like snakes. However, it is not a case for argument, but for action. I rely on you, my dear Ester, to assist me in discouraging these wild ideas of Alma's about going back to those savage countries. Believe me, the day of her wedding will see a great load lifted from my mind."

"The day of any girl's wedding usually has that kind of effect on her relatives, nowadays," Mrs. Harding reflected, aloud. "I will try to do what I can to meet your wishes—if you will give me an idea how to begin. When she returns shall I read her a lecture?"

"Certainly not; that would be unwise. Only—forgive my frankness—if you would not encourage her again as you did last night."

"I shall try to remember."

"Thank you. Another thing; you might, if she alludes to him, express your disapproval of the presumption of the person I have told you about——"

"Yes?"

"—and suggest that you look forward with solicitude to her marriage with some civilized Christian gentleman in proper position to become her husband. You know as well as I how Alma is situated in regard to money. My poor brother left hardly anything. I have this and my country house and a little other property—a comfortable life income. But in most of the estate I have only a life interest. I can do comparatively very little for her. You know just what you can do."

"Oh, dear, yes. I have been gambling terribly—in the g. h's."

Mrs. Sevenbanks started and flushed. "Pray do not let anyone hear you."

"No, of course not; but it is true. They are h's, you know—such fascinating h's! There is nothing like them in America; and that is fortunate, I suppose. Not even bridge whist——"

Mrs. Sevenbanks rose. "Let us go up stairs," she said; "I have some directions to give the seamstress."

With Alma returned her friend, Alice Dow, a young lady for whom Mrs. Sevenbanks always had a cordial welcome. The cordiality might have had root in the knowledge that Miss Dow's cousin had married a very decent earl, and that the Dows themselves were financially solid, if unpretentious. Alice was rather plain, large-featured, large-boned. She was quite tall, and would make a fine-looking woman if she ever acquired flesh enough. There was self-assertion about her that compelled admiration.

Alma's aunts were both far back in the drawing-room when the girls came in. Mrs. Sevenbanks was writing a letter; Mrs. Harding was at the piano trying to remember a Persian lullaby she had heard in Chicago.

She deserted the instrument to converse with the young ladies. The Claytons' dinner dance of the night before seemed to interest her.

"I am sorry I was not there," said Miss Dow. "Alma tells me there was a foreigner who told weird stories in broken, not to say shattered, English, and whom everybody seemed to take for a cannibal or a bandit."

"Was he handsome?" inquired Mrs. Harding, naïvely.

"About as beautiful as a totem pole," Alma replied. She noticed that her Aunt Sevenbanks had stopped writing to listen.

Alice Dow laughed. "He is an Indian, then?"

"He has some Indian blood, perhaps. I forget which tribe—we spoke of several. It might be Botocudo, or Bugre."

"Are not all those tribes cannibals?" came Mrs. Sevenbanks's cool, sweet inquiry across the room.

"Oh, yes, indeed," put in Mrs. Harding. "The terrible anthropophagi——"

"He seemed very fat and sleek," said Alma, indifferently. She began to think that her aunts had been discussing her and da Veiga. A rebellious sort of disgust came over her. Why should she not listen to a man because he was of another nationality—perhaps race? What difference did it make to her if he were part Indian? What interest had she in him beyond the fact that he reminded her of days long past; of life in another zone, under a bluer sky and in happier companionship; of her dear father, of the old home, of the mother who had died while she was yet a child; of all the impressions of life in youth—perhaps of something else back in those long-gone days—something vague, fine, unacknowledged even in her own heart; something that partook of the delicacy and freshness of that saving grace of the North, the northern Spring?

Mrs. Harding spoke suddenly and irrelevantly. "In Paris, during my last visit, I met many South Americans. I don't know, Alma, whether

you remember Vasquez—Roberto Vasquez. He was a writer—a poet, you know—and also, I think, a lawyer and once an attaché. Very handsome, with perfect features, and tall and straight. You ought to remember him. He came to the legation. Your father liked him. They tried to engage him to that terribly homely girl that—I forget her name. He was in Paris, still as handsome as ever, and not married yet. You don't remember him? But then you were so young."

"Yes," said Alma, slowly, "I remember Señor Vasquez." She paused a moment. "Why do you look at me? Do I seem pale? This ankle is going to bother me, after all."

III

WHEN Alma and her friend had gone up stairs before luncheon Miss Dow shrugged her shoulders and laughed softly as she observed: "You hadn't fully realized the seriousness, had you?"

"Of what?"

"Of your little flirtation with the cannibal last night."

"I suppose I hadn't, though Aunt Louise did say something about it in the carriage, coming home. One would think I wanted to abduct him. Sometimes I fancy I might as well marry some ordinary brute of a man and escape."

"You wouldn't prefer an extraordinary brute?"

"Such a preference could be easily satisfied, I imagine, if I did."

"Don't get bitter, my dear. Look at me. I'm twenty-five—nearly twenty-five—and single. I will be a hundred and twenty-five and single before I'll take any desperate step. I'd rather be bored than tortured."

"Suppose you were both?"

"Nobody ever is."

"Oh, yes, I have been; that is, bored and tortured by turns. You know how Aunt Sevenbanks is—and then she sends for Aunt Ester; and then, well, poor Aunt Ester, she would

like to please me all the time, and how can she? This morning, while I was out, Aunt Sevenbanks simply filled her up to the ears with her painful duty—I'm sure it's a painful duty—toward me. She will begin to work on me presently. She has begun already, in fact—about the anthropophagi."

"Why not get her off by herself and have a confidential talk? That is what I should do."

"Aunt Louise allows no opportunity for that."

Alice Dow was arranging her hair before the mirror. "You should create an opportunity—may I help myself to a hairpin or two? Thanks!—yes, create an opportunity. You are altogether too childlike, soft and unresisting and pliable. People can do what they please with you."

"You are very much mistaken if you think so," said Alma, angrily; "I have a very strong will of my own."

"You think you have. Now, don't get vexed. I tell you it is true. You haven't bone enough in your composition, backbone or any other kind of bone. Look at your wrists. What you have are very pretty, but what use are they? You can't play the piano; you are not a success at the violin. You never won a game of tennis, much less golf. I heard a man refer to you as the boneless maid. Of course he admired your beauty."

"What man?"

"I think it was Frank Sands."

"Why, he is more idiotic than I thought he was."

"Oh, it wasn't so bad. You are delicious to look at. But you haven't resisting power. Look at my wrists. Do you think anyone will ever trouble my peace of mind?" She pushed back her narrow sleeve cuffs and regarded her angular forearms with sincere pride.

"You wouldn't fight, would you?" said Alma, half induced to laugh.

"I might," said Miss Dow, just as the maid tapped on the door to inform them that luncheon was ready.

As the two descended the stairs to-

gether Alma whispered, nervously: "If you notice you will see how Aunt Ester has been prepared for action."

"Primed and loaded, eh?"

But no tell-tale indication was discernible throughout the meal. Soon afterward Miss Dow took her leave with a reassuring glance. Presently Mrs. Sevenbanks telephoned for her carriage and announced her intention of going out. Would Mrs. Harding accompany her? Mrs. Harding thought she would better stay and visit with Alma.

They agreed to go up to Mrs. Harding's room, because Alma could then inspect some new gowns her aunt had brought from Paris. Two of them had been worn once in Chicago, the lady declared, and were of course ruined. One could only drive out in a closed carriage there, she said. And besides, there was the huge chimney of a power house but a block away from the North Side mansion at which she had stopped.

One of the other gowns was too small for her. She had never worn it; she thought she would give it to Alma. It was a dinner dress of scarlet chiffon and satin. Alma thanked her and hated to deprive her of it, but she insisted, and even made her put the bodice on to see what alterations were necessary and if they could be made by Mrs. Sevenbanks's seamstress.

"And now, my dear," she said, "you see I wanted to have a talk with you while your Aunt Louise is out. For it seems to me you are not perfectly happy with her."

"Did she tell you I was not happy?" the girl asked, perversely.

"Oh, I can see."

"She talked with you about me this morning?" said Alma.

"She certainly did speak to me," Mrs. Harding acknowledged. "And I asked her if she desired me to take you to Paris or Caracas."

"Oh, Aunt Ester! Would you—*will* you take me to Venezuela? Oh, how happy I should be to get away from New York! I don't care a bit

for it. I don't care for society. I don't seem to belong to it."

"But, my dear child, you must! You see it is necessary. How else would you ever get properly married if you didn't?"

"Why should I get properly married? I don't see the necessity."

"But consider what a woman is at forty—single and thin—you will probably be thin—with the lines coming around her neck and a constant need to wear things to cover them; afraid to laugh because the marks around the mouth get deep, with always the tremendous expense for facial massage, and no husband to pay the bill."

"The men that I meet at the Claytons' and elsewhere," said Alma, "are very tiresome—and very insincere. I used to think it was only sincere people that tired one, but I was mistaken. My worldly knowledge is increasing. These men, you know, that make sweet speeches to one's face and when her back is turned call her names——"

"Names?"

"The boneless maid, for instance. Isn't that a nice title?"

"Why, it seems to me there was a poem your grandmamma used to be very fond of with that title. The boneless maid—or child—or it might have been painless—or sinless, I am not sure. Perhaps the sinless something."

Alma was not appeased. "I may be altogether lacking in bone," she said; "Alice Dow said so. All I know is that life is a bore most of the time, at least when you can't have any ideas of your own."

"Ideas of your own are like babies," said Mrs. Harding; "they are all right if you keep them quiet."

"I should be perfectly happy, Aunt Ester, if you would take me to Caracas. Why can't you? Only to be on horseback once more, galloping along beautiful mountain roads at sunrise, breathing the delicious air off the hill slopes, hearing such melody out of the forests, smelling such perfume from the orange groves;

climbing steep turns of path and suddenly coming along precipices to hear the roar of waterfalls; fording streams, swollen yellow rivers or crystal mountain brooks; stopping in the shade to scoop up delicious drinks with a *jicara*. Do you remember the journeys we had, papa and you and I and Mr. Harding, off to the mines or down to the banana *fincas* on the coast? our rides through the great forests, where the monkeys in the tree tops roared with the cold at daybreak when we were camping out, and the fun we had cooking our coffee over three logs, and the night in the thatched hut without walls, where the moonlight blazed silver fire and the nightingale sang in the thicket along the river?"

"Yes, yes, I do remember," said Mrs. Harding, drying her eyes; "I do remember those happy days, gone forever. I wish we could live them over, Alma; but it is impossible. I should be glad to take you with me, but your Aunt Louise would never consent. She told me so. She says you must give up the idea. You must marry a New York gentleman, she says. That is very hard." Her eyes were full again. "That is very hard. But I should never dare oppose your Aunt Louise. You must give up the idea. Ah, life is too sad! It is fortunate we do not have to live forever." She dried her eyes once more and took up a gold embroidered waist from the floor. "The hooks on this bodice are simply vile," she said; "I cannot make them hook at all. And the belt is rotten."

"Aunt Ester," Alma persisted, "you say Aunt Louise says I must marry a New York man. Do you think she has anyone in particular in mind?"

"No," Mrs. Harding sighed, "I cannot say that."

"It wouldn't be a bit of use," the girl went on. "I am not going to marry. There was a time when I had foolish dreams of someone who would be brave and true and poetic. I have found out that it is all nonsense."

"Yes," said Mrs. Harding, submissively, "but then the best thing is to please your Aunt Louise as much as possible and avoid irritating her. It seems she was irritated last night because of that man—what did you say his name was?"

Alma was prevented from replying by the approach at the half-open door of a maid, who brought the butler's salver with a letter for Mrs. Harding. Alma, moving a little to let the girl pass her, saw beside the letter a card decorated with something that might be a coronet. A moment later Mrs. Harding read aloud: "Geraldina." She quickly broke the seal. "Say that I will be down soon," she instructed the servant, and handed the letter to Alma. "Only fancy! News from home—that is, from friends now over in Paris. How charming! I suppose I must dress." She caught up a yellow crêpe scarf and held it to her cheek. "My face not steamed yet, and—black as a buzzard. Such a pleasing letter from Severino Gonzalez. This Geraldina—a count—must be from Brazil. What is his other name? da——"

"Da Veiga," read Alma, slowly. "Why, Aunt Ester, it must be the cannibal. I didn't know he was a count."

IV

"REALLY!" Mrs. Sevenbanks could put more into the three syllables than any other woman in New York. Mrs. Harding had been telling her about Señor da Veiga's call, his excellent letter of introduction and his very proper behavior. Mrs. Sevenbanks had looked at the card and smiled. "He called *with* the letter? . . . Alma saw him?"

"I sent for her to come down. It seemed to me there was no harm; besides, for a girl there is no man more interesting than the prohibited man. I do not think you need have the slightest concern about this Count Geraldina."

"If he is a South American, and an exile, how does he come to be a count?" Mrs. Sevenbanks inquired.

"Why, sometimes titles are conferred in Europe on South Americans of vast wealth."

"You mean they buy them. And you think he possesses vast wealth?"

"No, I do not," said Mrs. Harding, with candor. "I think he has no more than enough to live on. It seems he has not been long in New York. He at first stopped at a hotel, he says, but now has his own bachelor apartments in Madison avenue. I believe he would amuse Alma very much, and I advise you to let me present him to you and to receive him kindly if he calls. Others will receive him, you know. Besides, he is really not bad looking. It is only a matter of tan."

"He seems thoroughly impossible," objected Mrs. Sevenbanks, "but it may be that your view of the matter is not an unwise one."

In this way she gave a grudging permission, and da Veiga was brought under her personal inspection a few days later. She was polite to him, but she did not forget to inquire again about the title. Da Veiga, seated before her, of erect, imposing figure, over which his Prince Albert coat seemed buttoned with difficulty, with mustache and imperial waxed into diabolical points, a smile, as gracious and fatuous as that of an Indian idol, distending his cheeks, enlightened her after his own peculiar fashion:

"Until now, madama, I 'ave not make up my mind. Gradill 'ave I thought 'ow in my own country my father did say, 'I will be no more the *Conde*.' And 'e did fling forth the flag and did cry, 'I am *republi-cano*!' and with three times the *viva* in 'is throat, bang! 'e did fall down dead! Then I, who was in 'is place *Conde*, I did say the same; I did cry '*Viva la republica*!' But now, madama, you see, it may be in New York if I am not one *conde*, what I am?"

Mrs. Sevenbanks took her cue from this ingenuous confession. She would know something about his source of income.

"A title," she remarked, urbanely, "presupposes certain hereditary qualities that should merit esteem. One does well to think twice before dispensing with it. Of course, an extremely large fortune is required to maintain a title, even in New York."

"Ah, that is it. I did say to my friends that I did thank them for their vare kind offer. 'Motch oblige,' I did say—'motch oblige, my dear sirs. I will not to be *senador*.' You see, I rather make another million or two in New York. I place my concession and I sell my stock."

Mrs. Sevenbanks gazed at him in silence, her grayish-blue, impartial eyes studying him from the white scar at the centre of his forehead to the rich brown under his skin. And he returned her gaze with the same ingenuous, Indian-idol smile. Perhaps if Mrs. Sevenbanks had put up her glass—she was very slightly near-sighted, and the glass was remarkably strong—she might have discovered, lurking under the waxed points of his mustache, the flicker of muscle that no human countenance has ever succeeded in wholly suppressing—the flicker that gives the lie look.

From that time on Mrs. Sevenbanks seemed less apprehensive. During the days that Mrs. Harding remained at the house da Veiga called frequently. On one occasion, when he came early, Alma entertained him in company with Alice Dow. When he went away Miss Dow informed her friend that she had been reading up on aboriginal tribes of the Western Continent. "The Buggries," she said, "or whatever it is——"

"Boogray," corrected Alma.

"Well, whatever it is, you should see the pictures of them, with rings in their noses and under lips propped out with bits of stone. Oh, they are delightful! Now, if this particular Bug——"

"Oh, what has the poor wretch ever done to you?" cried Alma. A sudden inexplicable pity had come into her heart for the unfortunate, uncouth

individual who had sat so ill at ease in her aunt's drawing-room and still had seemed so loath to go away. Alice Dow glanced sharply at her.

"You alarm me," she said. "Please don't alarm me again. Embrace follows right after pity in the poem, you remember."

"One might find it difficult to embrace such dimensions," Alma responded, listlessly. She was never offended at Alice Dow. As for da Veiga, she still pitied him.

The next time he came there were others present, and she was pouring tea. Some of the guests had met him before, and appeared pleased and amused at the second meeting; others, regarding him for the first time, looked as if they were not quite sure whether or not to follow Mrs. Sevenbanks's lead. That lady was thoroughly courteous, if not cordial, to the foreigner. There was humility, Alma thought, in the way he took his leave, saying, "I did not exspect to found so many ladies and gentlemen. I did come to say good-bye to Mrs. Harding. She is one vare fine lady. I will come to-morrow to say good-bye to 'er."

He kept his word next day, but arrived too late, for Mrs. Harding, who was going to Washington, had just driven away with Mrs. Sevenbanks to the station. Alma, who had caught cold and dared not go out, was at home, alone.

"I was preparing to be awfully dull, Count Geraldina," she said, lightly, "but you will brighten me up. We will speak Spanish, and you must tell me some of your thrilling stories about the Paraguay War and the frontier battles. You will have some coffee, will you not? My Aunt Ester took coffee just before going. She prefers it. Tea is for sick people, she says."

Da Veiga drank the contents of the cup with a solemn face, and almost at one swallow.

"She is one vare nice lady," he declared. "When you write to 'er you must please give most respectful and cordially regards." He balanced

the egg-shell cup on his knee. "She is one flower," he pursued, "from those fair land. Oh, those fair land! Last night in my dream I did go back and see my 'ome. *Ai de mi!* I did wake and I did weep. Again I did see the mountains and the rivers wide and deep. Then in my dream I did look far down and I did see the smoke and 'ear the terrible *cañone*. And I did found the *diablos*, the enemy, all around, and all their guns point on my. They take my to the prison, they tie my, they leave my. I know what they say. Next morning—bang! shot dead. Oh, my God! They set bread and water by my—they leave my there. Night come. I pray, 'Oh, *mio Dios!* savèd my!' I work my 'ands for 'ours. Pretty soon—bim! I break the rope. I untie my feet. I listen. No sound. Then I 'ear something like someone *ronca*—the man they did put to guard my, 'e did sleep. 'E—what you call it?—'e began *roncar*. I creep out. I take the knife from 'im. I creep on. The next man move; I take 'im so—by that throat. 'E draw the knife and so—cut my. I did stab 'im back. 'E did fall. I did found my 'orse, I climb on 'im. I ride—fast—fast—oh, my poor 'orse! I did clasp the neck, I did kiss—I did spur 'im on. On—on oh, *mio Dios!* I know the road; a league, another league, until I get over cross the *limites*. I kiss, I baig my 'orse, I put my face to the neck—'e did go on—on—on—then 'e did fall—boum—dead!"

In his excitement he had thrown himself heavily from his chair on his knees, forgetting the egg-shell cup and saucer. And these now lay in quite small pieces. He looked at them in alarm.

"I am vare sorry," he began.

"Oh, it doesn't matter at all," said Alma.

He rose slowly. "But I will buy one more for you," he continued, as he got upon his feet.

"Don't think of it," she insisted, with an amiable smile. "I was so interested! How terrible it is to be at the mercy of enemies! And in

Paraguay!—the Paraguayans are rather cruel, I think."

"They are *diablos*!" said da Veiga; "they will eat their fathers."

The flicker that Mrs. Sevenbanks had not observed was around his mouth. If Mrs. Sevenbanks had not observed it, how should a person of half her age?

He said good-bye and went away, and Alma made haste to secure all the fragments of the broken cup and saucer. She wondered if she should have much trouble to replace the cup, and thought, amusedly, that if her aunt had been there it would have been interesting to watch her face. Not that the slightest vexation would have shown itself, but on the other hand, Mrs. Sevenbanks would have perhaps foregone her exquisite good-form impulse to break another, in order to prove to her guest what very destructible, trivial matters such teacups are. "Ah, well, the poor man was hardly to blame," she decided. "I made him dramatic. He looked absurd on the floor. If his waistcoat buttons had burst off, as I thought they were going to . . ."

V

THE second morning following Miss Sylvester received a letter:

MY DEAR, KIND MISS ALMA:

I fill vare surry to say that as yet is not chure that I can found the cop I did break last night. I do not know if I have time laft to go to the store to-day, because at 3 P.M. I shall meet some gentleman who did ask to buy some stock from my. Gradill I have thought of you, *no sabiendo porqué!* You are one of those yong lady that has mad a graty impression in my mind! I most say that you have mad me to thinke that true beuty only exesist at the Latins blood. Remember that I will alwes be your friend.

By-in-by.

Yours respectfull and cordial,
RUFINO DA VEIGA.

She had been feverish all night, and had been awake much of the time wondering if she should be well enough to go out in the morning and

duplicate the broken article, and where the set had been purchased. As yet she believed the cup had not been missed. She had just taken some very strong coffee, hoping to brace her tremulous nerves and hold them together, but they seemed ready to fly apart. Now, under her aunt's steadfast gaze, as she opened and read the letter, she felt herself going all to pieces. Something in her back seemed to give way with a snap; her limbs began to tremble, her throat muscles were knotted. Suddenly she began to laugh, with laughter that was strange and painful, and then tears were running down her cheeks, tears, tears, tears that would never cease. She fell back on the chair helpless and conscious of her helplessness.

"James," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, "my salts—in the drawing-room, on the onyx pedestal, I think." In the meantime she was putting ice water on the girl's temples and taking charge of da Veiga's unfortunate communication.

Later on, when Alma had recovered enough to go up to her room and lie down, and Mrs. Sevenbanks had given her a spoonful of her own particular remedy, the girl inquired what had become of the letter.

"I brought it up stairs, of course," said Mrs. Sevenbanks. "I glanced at it—it seemed proper I should know what news you had received to affect you so terribly. I need hardly say that I, too, am shocked. The impertinence of the man is beyond conception; I should like, by the way, to know what he has reference to; he speaks of something that was broken. He surely hasn't broken anything here?"

"Oh, yes, he has, Aunt Louise," said Alma, with desperate resolution. She drew a long breath. "It was—one of your cups."

"One of my cups!" Mrs. Sevenbanks turned pale. "You can't mean my five-o'clock-tea set!"

Alma nodded weakly. "Of course he will replace——"

"Replace! the clumsy monster!" Mrs. Sevenbanks trembled with an-

ger. "Replace! They are no ordinary—they were specially imported! Alma, this is really too much! To destroy my property and to presume to address a letter to you! I shall give the butler orders. It is all your Aunt Ester's fault—all her fault! I shall write her very plainly."

She turned and went trembling from the room. Alma lay still and thought. After a while she got up and saw that da Veiga's letter, properly folded in its envelope, was on the dressing-case. Her aunt's perfect breeding was always to be relied on. She lay down again, reproaching herself for the thought that had suggested itself that Mrs. Sevenbanks might make use of his letter to insult him.

The medicine she had taken soothed her, and she remained in bed nearly all day. Just before dinner she discovered that da Veiga had called and left cards, and had been told that the ladies were not at home. She felt sorry for him, and wished she had not impressed him as "kind." Probably he would keep on calling and being told they were not at home. He would perhaps think it was her fault, that she meant to be unkind to him—because of the cup! Or perhaps he would write to her again, and her aunt would be even more vexed. She wished vaguely that she might come upon him somewhere outside the house and in some way be able to give him a hint that her aunt was very rigid in her notions; or perhaps lead him to think that they were going away, so that he would not venture to call again. At all events, she could correct his possible idea that North American young ladies are more emancipated in the matter of receiving letters from gentlemen than Spanish-American young ladies.

The next day she felt very much better, and as it was a delightful Spring morning she started out soon after luncheon to call on Alice Dow. She had gone a few blocks from her home, had, in fact, arrived at an entrance to the Park, when all at once she saw coming slowly toward her—

da Veiga. He did not seem to see her, and she stood irresolute for a moment, wondering if he could be on his way to call at her home. But presently he glanced in her direction, quickened his steps and came on to meet her. He had a parcel in each hand and could only make one of his low, absurd bows.

"I did wish to take some flowers," he began, holding out to her the parcel in his left hand.

"Flowers? Oh, thank you. You are very kind." They were American beauty roses, and she took the paper from them and inhaled their fragrance with great delight. There were few people on the Avenue, and it seemed to her that the opportunity she desired had come quickly, and she must make the most of it. "I am so sorry," she said, "that I could not have the pleasure of receiving you. But you know we are very busy now; there is so much to be done before we go away to the country. We are going very early this year—quite immediately, you know." Her ears were beginning to burn, as they always did when she was telling anything not strictly true. At such times it was her neck that blushed rather than her cheeks.

"You are going away from New York?" repeated da Veiga, with solemn eyes. "But you did get one letter I did write to you?"

"Yes," said Alma, hastily. "Yes, and so, you see, I shall be saying good-bye to you for a long while, as I shall not see you again. And you mustn't mind about that cup—"

"I did find one cop, and I did bring," said da Veiga, extending the other parcel.

She hesitated. If her aunt were partly pacified! . . . The desire to see what he had brought seized her. Hardly anyone was passing near them. It was but a few steps into the great Park—under a tree whose leaves seemed to have unfolded in the night stood a bench—only nursemaids and their charges. . . .

"Let us go over and sit down for a moment," she said. "I have been

ill, and am not strong." In any case she must prevent his calling again. "It was kind of you to trouble about it," she then said, opening the paper and the little box as she spoke. "It was most kind of you," she repeated, slowly and falteringly, as her eyes fell on the heavy German china he had selected. "My aunt," she went on, "has—has already ordered it replaced, but it was not the less kind of you. And this is very pretty, though slightly larger."

"It is yours," said da Veiga, solemnly.

"Oh, thank you." She gazed alternately at the flowers and the cup. Could she go on carrying these to Alice Dow's? She dared not return home, for da Veiga would beg to accompany her. If she carried the cup to the Dows' Alice's mother would have to hear the story. She would not mind if it were only Alice—but Alice's mother! If she could get away from da Veiga doubtless she could find a messenger office and send the cup home, addressed to herself. But in that case her aunt would see it and wonder. She could invent no possible excuse. It bore not the slightest resemblance to the precious set.

Da Veiga broke the silence, that had become strange and noticeable. "You will go away—out of New York?"

"Yes," she smiled. "You know everyone goes away from New York in the Summer. It is always so hot."

"And to where will you go?"

"To the country," said Alma, nervously. "Quite a way from here. Off in the mountains, you know."

"I am glad that you will be in the mountains," said da Veiga, "for I like the mountains. By-in-bye I will come to see you. You will give my the directions?"

Alma made no reply. She sat very still, gazing across—far across—at a lady passing down the Avenue. As she gazed her face was growing whiter every minute.

"What is that?" demanded da

Veiga, with sudden sharpness. "What is the matter?"

"Oh," she said, relaxing in an instant. "I thought—I thought it was my aunt, and I was frightened."

"You are 'fred of your aunt?" he asked. "She is not one kind lady?"

"Oh, yes," said Alma, slowly. "She is very kind."

"But you are 'fred of 'er?"

"She would be very vexed to find me sitting here—with a gentleman."

"But you are with my. If one man look at you I shoot—bang—'e is dead!"

"But that would be very terrible," she remonstrated. It seemed to her she was only talking to a big child whom it was hard to get rid of.

"Nothing shall be terrible that I will do for you," said da Veiga, emphatically.

The girl flushed. "I must go now," she said. "I will bid you good-bye, and I will take with me this pretty souvenir and the flowers."

"I will go by you, and I will carried them," he suggested.

"Oh, no, no; that would not be proper—and my aunt would be so angry. Good-bye, Señor da Veiga." She held out her hand.

He bowed low and touched his lips to her glove. "Good-bye," he said, mournfully, "my only friend. Good-bye, farewell."

Alma walked hurriedly away out of the Park and left him there. She had tried to show him what he must not do, and she had succeeded only in drawing him and herself into a ridiculous position. Suppose anyone had seen him kissing her hand! She hardly knew where she was going. And that wretched German cup and saucer—what to do with them? Couldn't she lose the box somewhere? She would go into some store and buy something, and pretend to forget the parcel; but the clerk would run out after her. She would drop it as she crossed the street; but she would be seen by some policeman and kept in view for suspicious conduct. She would leave it in a street car; but the conductor would shout after her.

She went on, hot and tormented, toward the Dows'. As she turned the corner she came on a ragged urchin. "Here, boy," she cried, thrusting it at him, "take this—it is a pretty cup—take it home to your—to your mother—quick!" and fled. As she ran up the steps and touched the bell button she heard a shrill voice inquiring where she had "swiped" it. But she only smiled—she was rid of the thing. Nor did she mind Alice's suggestion that she appeared feverish. She presented the roses to Alice's mother with a delightful feeling of diplomacy. Da Veiga was not mentioned.

VI

IN reply to her mother's plain question Alice Dow admitted she had known something about the affair. "I am no tale-bearer or mischief-maker, mamma," she said, bluntly. "I knew Alma was not happy with her aunt, and I was not surprised at any odd action of hers. As to his paying attentions to her, I have seen them walking together. But I didn't imagine it had gone as far as an engagement. I don't suppose it is anything worse than that," she concluded.

Mrs. Sevenbanks had sent a note begging them to come to her at once, as she was in great distress over Alma, who had refused to decline the addresses of an adventurer. She particularly wished to see Alice.

"Of course, if you insist, mamma," said the girl, "but I reserve my right not to interfere. If Alma should contemplate marrying Count Geraldina, who can prevent? She is of age, and must accept responsibilities. I don't know what we are going over to see Mrs. Sevenbanks for, anyway."

"She has sent for us," said the mother, finally, and with some sharpness. And of course they went.

Mrs. Sevenbanks was sitting rigidly upright in the drawing-room. She seemed too piteously helpless to

rise. Mrs. Dow went up and took her hand. "There is nothing serious the matter, I trust?"

"I am waiting to hear," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, with an effort. "I have sent a messenger—Alma has gone away."

"Gone away?" Mother and daughter repeated the words together.

"Yes. I am obliged to confess that we had a most painful interview. It began with my acquainting her with a proposal of marriage I had received for her; from an excellent *parti*—Colonel Clifford's cousin, Mr. Addison Clifford, a wealthy widower, as you know. She made some impertinent remarks about his first three wives, and then informed me that for weeks she had been permitting this adventurer's attentions—secretly, of course. I naturally expressed my horror, my aversion to the man, my disbelief in his title of count." Mrs. Sevenbanks paused and breathed exhaustedly. "She then assured me that the person had proposed marriage, and she had decided to accept him. I could hardly believe my senses. I begged her to consider what she was saying—to remember that she might yet care for some good man, and would then feel shame at having spoken in this way. She answered that she had had a romantic affection in her youth for someone favorably known to her father, that they had been separated forever, and that all the feeling she was now capable of—sympathy—was given to this—person. I was naturally very angry. I bade her believe that if ever she took such a false step she must expect no countenance from me, no legacy. She retorted that as he was, or would be, a millionaire, it mattered little. I cannot help thinking that she is not in her right mind. It seemed to me that I must see Alice and ask her if Alma had told her anything."

"Oh, Mrs. Sevenbanks," exclaimed Alice, "I am so sorry! But really I can't believe she will do anything so foolish. She will return presently, I am sure. We have only to wait."

"I have already waited nearly three hours," said Mrs. Sevenbanks.

"I could never have believed it of Alma," said Mrs. Dow. "Like Alice, I cannot think she will commit any folly. But did she not say where she was going?"

"She said—" Mrs. Sevenbanks spoke faintly—"that she was going to meet da Veiga and that—they were going to All Asphodels' Church to—be married."

"You forbade her?" cried Mrs. Dow. The Dows were so very old-fashioned.

"Forbade? She is twenty-three. . . . I did not credit it. She soon left the house. An hour ago I sent—to All Asphodels'. And I am still waiting—the reply."

The Dow ladies looked at each other in consternation.

"There is nothing to do but wait," Alice repeated, "and you must have courage, dear Mrs. Sevenbanks."

"If the worst comes," said Alice's mother, "perhaps there is really nothing against the man. He seems to be received by some very nice people. Though he is not exactly the kind one would think of selecting for a charming young girl, he might still prove a devoted husband. He has been at the Claytons', and——"

"Mamma!" cried Alice, reproachfully.

"My dear, I am only looking at the darkest side; it is well to be prepared. And if he has such a great deal of money—for, after all, money is the chief thing nowadays——"

"But *has* he money? *Has* he money?" Mrs. Sevenbanks urged the question with a strange despair. "*Has* he money?" Her voice was almost a wail. Silence ensued for some moments. "I have tried," said Mrs. Sevenbanks then, "to make Alma's life a happy one. I should not have indulged her more had she been my own daughter—no, rather less. Whatever she has longed for I have sought to give her. I cannot remember to have denied her a single thing. It was my desire to see her happy. There seemed born in

her, however, that strange taste for those wild countries. You know my brother was Consul down there when he met and married her mother. Years later he was appointed Minister—only to be unjustly recalled, for the mere expression of an opinion. I could not take her to South America, but I would have taken her to London, to the Continent, to Egypt, around the world, to any place where there is no yellow fever. It seemed as if her one wish ungratified was to go where there is yellow fever. It seemed to me one might be happy without contracting that disease. The little property that her father left—it was extremely little, after unfortunate investments—I sought to preserve for her. It yields but a pitiful six hundred a year. The cruelest part is her having met this man and walked with him on the Avenue. Fortunately it is a time of year when no one is in town. We should have gone away but for my delaying because of the Clifford proposal."

The Dow ladies regarded her in pitying silence. It all seemed unreal, impossible. The Sevenbanks pride and reserve to crumble in this fashion! Was it really Mrs. Sevenbanks? They were conscious of great moral discomfort. It was plainly their duty as intimate friends to remain until the messenger returned, but they would have been glad to escape. Their curiosity was considerable, but it was overshadowed by dread. They felt that if, on the other hand, their fears were unfounded, Mrs. Sevenbanks would regret having said so much. The whole thing was most unfortunate. Besides, it was no less embarrassing to sit waiting in silence than impossible in such moments of suspense to introduce any other subject.

Intolerable intervals must have an end. The fine warning of an electric bell preceded only by some seconds the entrance of the butler with a letter.

"Dear Mrs. Sevenbanks, do have courage," said Alice, as she had said before. "Shall I open it?"

Mrs. Sevenbanks, trying to rise, murmured a faint assent.

"It is from Alma," said the girl, tremulously. "It only says, 'We were married, as I told you, at All Asphodels' and go at once——'"

She stopped, for Mrs. Sevenbanks had sunk down in a quivering, helpless heap.

VII

DA VEIGA and his bride had not gone away on any of the elaborate wedding tours he had previously suggested. There were certain capitalists he must meet who were to form a company of which he should be treasurer. Alma remained for the present in the Madison avenue apartment to which he had taken her. As she had never lived in an apartment, the novelty was pleasing. The rooms were smaller than any to which she had ever been accustomed, but they were delightfully, even luxuriously, furnished, even to an excellent little white-and-gold piano. There was only one servant—besides, of course, the weekly laundress—but this was a very capable Swedish woman. They were on the top floor, and there was a fine view and frequently a refreshing breeze. When da Veiga went away a few days after their marriage and left her at the window, looking out, she said to herself that at least he was a kind man, and as they were to have a good deal of money she would never need to regret the step she had taken.

By this time her Aunt Sevenbanks had got over the shock. By this time word had doubtless been sent her Aunt Ester, who was now in Paris, acquainting her with the result of Severino Gonzalez's unfortunate letter of introduction. By this time the Dows knew of her marriage, and Alice had shrugged her shoulders and said her say about aboriginal tribes. By this time it had been whispered about among such of her aunt's friends as had not left the city, and it would soon ring in the ears and roll under the tongues of those at the seaside

and in the country what awful thing that pretty little niece of Mrs. Sevenbanks had gone and done. There had not been much in the newspapers about it, fortunately, and the meagre announcement she had seen had made no mention of da Veiga's title, so that there would be no ridicule on that point.

It was rather nice to have someone morally or physically on his knees to her half the time. The warm weather was enervating, and they led a lazy life. Da Veiga always slept very late in the morning. At ten he would have his cup of black coffee, his cigarette case of black cigarettes and his morning newspaper of black headlines brought to him in bed. At twelve or later, after slow consumption of the contents of each of these, he would get up and make a correspondingly slow toilet.

They had been married a month or more when the first faint shadow of disillusion came creeping into that apartment. Alma had risen early one morning at the touch of a sunbeam that had lifted her eyelids, and had herself brought the coffee and the newspaper—the cigarette case was already under his pillow—to her husband. She had thought he was awake, and he was not. There was a sudden commotion of the bedclothes, a heavy lurching over, a savage human growl: "You don't will let my sleep! 'Ere 'ave I not sleep all night. You make my——"

In the shock of surprise and fright she let the cup slip, some drops of very hot coffee splashed on his face, and the Count Geraldina sat up in bed and swore in his own language an amazing oath.

Three hours later he was on his knees saying good-bye and calling her his angel, his life, his Alma indeed, his veritable soul, before setting out for Delmonico's, where he was to meet some gentlemen. For the first time it seemed to her there was too much wax on his mustache and chin tuft.

That evening he returned very late. He had had a three-hour luncheon,

he said, and was not hungry. He was sorry not to have come home sooner, and he would have a plate of consommé. The wine he had drunk at luncheon caused him to speak louder than usual, and he ate his soup audibly. After dinner—it was a long Midsummer day and still light at eight—they sat talking in the bow window of their small drawing-room.

"I did show to them 'ow they shall organize their companeeeah," said da Veiga, getting his cigarette case from the top of a curio cabinet, "and I did talk to them like one *diablo*. 'Gentlemens,' I did say, 'you will not found any other way. You give my commixion or you give my cash. You give my what I shall need. One million—what is that?'"

He moved about looking for matches, and Alma quickly rose to supply the want. "But I thought the company was already organized," she said.

He continued to move about the room and made no reply to this. "You see," he went on with his own train of thought, "I 'ave long know those peoples. But I will found one way to get that money." He sat down again and smoked harder, gazing across the town. Presently he took the cigarette holder from his lips. "I 'ave too much pain to smoke," he said. "Was 'ere one man did shoot my in those wars; 'ere in this cheek."

"Wasn't the bullet extracted?" she inquired.

"Oh, that bullet. It near did kill my. You see back of this ear one mark. By this it did go out."

Alma reflected. "I suppose you are joking," she said. "There is a look in your eyes and around your mouth as if what you say is not true." The flicker had made itself dimly perceptible to her, though even yet she did not fully comprehend its meaning.

"What you say?" cried da Veiga. He tried to seem hurt at the suggestion, but was soon laughing and telling of jewels he had seen that day which he should purchase for her later on.

It seemed to her that night that sleep would never come. The room was very warm; July in town was something she had never before known. What air came in at the windows had no purity left; it seemed to rise soiled with the foul breath of thousands on thousands. The moon, some three hours high, was full and orange red, with the promise of still greater heat. She had not seen it so intense of color since the year before, when, she remembered, it had risen over the dunes that lay between the sea and the cottage where her aunt and she had dwelt. From this memory she gave thought to her aunt, serious, long thought for the first time in those fifteen days of changed existence. She recalled every circumstance of leaving home; how when she had sent for her trunks they had been delivered to the expressman without word or line; how no communication and no reproach had come to her. From remembering she could not but turn to speculating on what her aunt had said or done, if anything, in the matter; if the Dows had censured her very much, and if they would cut her were she to meet them on the street when they came back to the city in the Autumn. She wondered if her aunt had really felt very bad or was merely a little sad and much relieved to be rid of her responsibilities. She wondered what had become of Clifford, the widower. She wondered when she should meet her aunt again and what words would be exchanged between them. She felt a strange uneasiness at the thought of that meeting. She felt as if her aunt might ask her some unanswerable question; she felt restless and suffocated; her limbs were hot, and ached. She would have liked to spread a sheet on the floor of the drawing-room and stretch herself on it, but she feared to disturb da Veiga. He was long since asleep—dreaming perhaps of the men with whom he had had the luncheon. She felt that the night was going to be very long and she herself very lonely.

She felt as if something had changed; as if some veil was torn away and she saw more clearly. There was a heavy feeling on her heart. It seemed to her that she had done harm to some human being, and could never repair it. Tears oozed slowly from under her eyelids and wet her face and presently the pillow. Her throat contracted so that she could hardly breathe. She had not meant to be unkind . . . to anyone; she had not been able to be unkind . . . to da Veiga. And thus . . . she still had been unkind . . . to others . . . perhaps to herself!

VIII

"Oh, poor my darling!" Da Veiga had come home late again. "To-day was one vare warm day. I was near to die. You see they did meet. They did send for my and I did go—" The perspiration stood large on his brow as he spoke. "They think to rob one poor foreigner, and they make mistake. Those Americanos are one—I beg your pairdone, I was near to swear. Oh, *querida*, when I did feel sure I did like to say, 'I take you so—by that neck, I break it—so, with my two 'ands.'"

Alma, watching him in a fascinated way, moved back unconsciously, a trifle pale.

"What is that?" he cried, irritably. "You are 'fred?'" Then suddenly changing to a smile, "*Querida*, I will go take off my coat, also my colyar. You did eat? No? We eat together. But frest I will drink one glass of water."

She carried it to him in the dressing-room, and he paused to swallow the contents in a single long, large draught and ask for more.

"But it is ice water," she said, "and you are very warm—"

"Oh, well, well, well!" he cried, crossly, flinging off his clothing. "Vare well, I wait." When he had attired himself more comfortably they went into the dining-room together, where the Swedish servant was placing the soup on the table.

"Why is not that window ope'?" he demanded, still very cross.

"There is a strong breeze," said Alma, "and I thought the soup—and you—"

He would not wait for the explanation but threw up the sash with a noisy bang and took his seat. "I am so fresty," he murmured, seizing a second glass of water and swallowing it between two breaths. "What *sopa* is that?" He tasted it suspiciously.

"It is cream of celery, I think," Alma responded, feebly.

"Cream of *inferno*!" He flung down his spoon. "Where is that *ajo*? That woman is one estupida! I am sick of eat that *sopa* made by 'er. She is one big, oogly Swedie. I will send 'er from that kitchen; I will found one man." He had overlooked the garlic on a small dish near his plate. Now observing it, he began to tear it viciously into small pieces and drop it into the soup. "I will found one man," he repeated.

"Oh, Rufino, what could I do with just a man?" said Alma, beginning to show petulance. "I am here all alone, and I must have a maid. It seems odd enough, anyway—only one servant."

Da Veiga laughed. His favorite dish had restored his humor. "Oh, what a fine weather!" he cried, as the wind blew in strong over the lower housetops; "what a fine weather!" His countenance glistened with moisture; he suggested a large sponge. He would have no dessert, only his coffee and *cigarros*. The wind blew in delightfully. Later, when they returned to the drawing-room, he began to hum a song that Alma had always liked—"O, Linda Flor." It came up with such ease from his deep chest that she had often wondered if he might not have been a really great singer. His ordinary speaking voice was melodious and well modulated. It was, in truth, one of his chief attractions, although she had never especially considered the fact.

After a little da Veiga ceased hum-

ming and spoke in a tone of retrospection.

"One girl did used to sing that song. I did know 'er." The pupils of his eyes darkened slowly with emotion. "She was one *diablo*," he said, under his breath. "I was near to kill 'er one day."

Alma stopped playing instantly and turned toward him. "To kill whom?" she asked.

"One girl did sing that song."

"But why did you wish to kill her?" she insisted; "did she sing so badly?"

"She did try to make my love 'er, and I did 'ate 'er soon." He sat comfortably in his easy chair, his feet on the little sofa that stood in the bow-window curve. From this window the view covered three directions. One saw many steeples and spires and tremendous hotel buildings and far away the haze that rose from the river.

"Now is vare motch more cool," said da Veiga, after an extended silence. He turned and saw that Alma had disappeared. "Where you are, *querida*?" he demanded.

"I am lying down in the bedroom," she answered, through the silken portières. "I am tired."

Then came another silence.

Some time later, it might have been hours, she was awakened by deep groans. Da Veiga had not retired, but had fallen asleep on the bow-window sofa. There had come a rapid change of atmosphere; the night had turned cold, as if a storm had burst somewhere.

"*Querida*! I am vare sick—near to die!"

"What . . . is the matter?"

It had taken some moments for her to come back from spirit wanderings. Her dream had been of the dunes down by the sea, where, with her aunt, she had spent the Summer the year before. There had been a tempest, and it was calm again, and there was sunlight shining over the sea. Now she emerged from the dimness of the bedroom in her white, clinging draperies, and shivering with cold and alarm, repeated the question.

"I did take cold," he murmured, with a long shudder. "I breathe so—vare 'ard I breathe. 'Ere in my breast I am sick. Maybe I come to die this night. *Ai, ai!* Maybe I come to die!"

"Will you not retire?" she asked, with her hand on his forehead. He responded only with a deeper groan. She turned the lights higher and sat down beside him. "If you will not go to bed," she said, presently, "I will cover you with blankets here and watch at your side awhile." She drew down the windows. He seemed to her not ill, but merely chilled and stiff from lying in the draughts. She realized that her alarm had been very fleeting, and it gave her a sense of uneasiness. Her thoughts were slightly confused, yet there was no actual fear.

But sleep did not come to him, even when she had tucked coverlets carefully about his couch and made herself comfortable in a Turkish chair. He continued to speak dreamily at intervals.

"I am one poor foreigner," he murmured, "yet so my wife is vare good to my. I never did thought to found one so good wife. I did 'ave such estrange life. In those day when my father did fling away that graty name and cry 'I am *republicano*!'—in those day, when I did ride free upon that grandy lands, I never did thought. . . . My mother was daughter of one great chief. 'E was one vare large *Indio*. 'E did go down from that mountains into those beautiful Bolivia. There 'e did see one young girl most beautiful. 'E did love 'er when 'e did see 'er and 'e did steal 'er and carry off—off—up back to that mountain. She did 'ave one daughter when she die. My grandfather did love that daughter and did make 'er to be like one *princesa*. By-in-bye come one tall young nobly man, son of one rich *conde*, and fall in love with 'er. 'E marry 'er and take away. And I did born of this. I did born there on those *frontera* of that beautiful Bolivia—I did lead one wildy life. I did take motch money

and did go away to Europa and did gamb'—” His voice died off in a sigh.

“Try to sleep,” said Alma, in a tone of pure compassion. She began to feel now that the only real emotion left in the world was that of compassion.

But it seemed that he must go on recalling his life. “I did gamb' and did do motch wickedness. I did forget 'ow that my mother, who was one angel, did say to my, ‘Rufino, never leave to pray and read in your 'oly book your prayers.’ And when so I did forget, motch bad did come to my. I did know one woman—one *diablo Americano* that I did found in Paris. And she did try to make my love 'er. Many things she did do when I was sick; vare well she did take care of my when I did 'ave one *fiebre*. And she did travel with my to this country. But she did think to make my married her. Then she did 'ate my. I fill vare surry, but she was one *diablo*. Now she is dead.”

Again his voice died away in a sigh. But this time Alma did not respond. She was not asleep. She had heard all that he had said, and she felt herself growing numb and unable to speak. It seemed to her that for the first time in her life she had tasted actual anguish. There was a single question that seemed piercing her with its desire to be uttered: “How long ago was this . . . other woman?” But she could not utter it. Her power of utterance was gone. Cold, dumb, inert, she sat there, scarcely caring to breathe. She knew now that she had made some terrible mistake, from which there could be no receding—to which there could come no end but death. She heard the clock in the room adjoining strike three, and she was wide awake.

IX

DA VEIGA was quite recovered by the following noon, and went down town in a cheerful mood. Immediately he had gone the Swedish girl

came to give warning. She was obliged to leave in order to go and take care of a sick relative. The postman, she explained, had brought her a letter on the first delivery, before her mistress was up. Alma, in reply, requested only that she prepare luncheon before going. It did not surprise her as much as it might have surprised her the day before to hear that the maid had not received her wages for three months. She was fast becoming accustomed to queer things.

While having luncheon she resolved not to pay the girl, but to ask her to come back that evening when Mr. da Veiga should be at home. At the last moment she changed her mind and decided that the girl might need money and she would give her at least a part of what was due. By three o'clock she was alone in the apartment. There was a cool and pleasant breeze from the west, and she thought it would be nice to go out for a walk. And then she remembered that da Veiga had said he should return early. She decided she would look through the servant's now unoccupied room and also the pantries. But this took only a short time. She stood looking out and down from the drawing-room window. She felt a sudden disgust for the house and wondered if there would not be time enough to slip out, get on a street car and ride down as far as her old home. In all these days she had not ventured back to that neighborhood. Of course, her aunt was not in town, but merely to see the house once more would be a satisfaction. But da Veiga would come home early, and she must not be away. She opened the piano and tried to play, but her fingers were stiff; the piano gave out a dull, perfunctory sound. She went back to the window, and looking into the street again, saw a woman, tall, slender, rather shabby, moving slowly along the opposite side. Her inactive mind considered the question irresolutely whether or not there were other women worse off than herself.

Then her brain became possessed of one single agonizing, fascinating interrogation: "How long ago was that . . . other woman?" The horror of that thought was like a suffocating weight. More than once before da Veiga had left the house she had started to ask him—to beg him to tell her when—how long since—he had come from Europe with—that woman—the woman who had wanted him to marry her—who had loved him, probably. Each time she had felt herself grow pale. And now he was gone, and she could not ask him. She could only fall to thinking again about . . . if the woman had loved him. And from that to considering her own feeling for him—if it had been love—or affection . . . and what love was—and what affection—and what had brought about her . . . affection for him . . . or . . . or love? . . . She had not been attracted by his personality. The title she had made him promise to lay aside—she had not wanted American friends to ridicule them. She recalled again the days of the early Spring—the visit from her Aunt Ester, and especially the night at the Claytons', when da Veiga had stood bowing and bending over her chair and telling of his escape out of the Argentine. Incidents of the days that followed flashed back upon her—the afternoons in which he had called; the breaking of her aunt's teacup; the chance meeting in the Avenue and the untruths she had told about going at once to the country; her endeavor to get rid of the cup and saucer he had bought; her flight to the Dows'; the mocking laughter of the ragged urchin into whose hands she had thrust the offending china. And after that—another morning—was it not the very next?—when the sky was full of clouds and soft Spring rain was falling, and she, setting forth to the shops to make purchases for her aunt, and turning the corner suddenly, fell almost into the arms of da Veiga. And his first question, that had caused her heart to swell up and choke her:

"Why you did give to one streety boy that cop which I did buy and bring to you?"

The consuming mortification of that moment, too intense for forgetting; the dumbness that had stricken her, the helplessness, the silence that had lasted until he had said: "You see, I understand. She make you to be one 'fred yong lady. That is it."

She recalled his story of having followed her, having seen with his own eyes what she had done, and of having repurchased his spurned offering; and her continued, helpless silence that had seemed to create a sort of confidence between them; and next in the chain of events her attempt to atone for wounding his feelings by kind interest in what he had to say of himself and the gigantic enterprise in which he was engaged—the company which should send enormous vessels to the new South American pearl fisheries, the monopoly of which was in his hands as a government concession—his purpose to reap rich reward—millions—as his share; and then—his plans to go back to South America.

She considered the growth of the strangely begotten confidence between them, which had led her to forget wholly how he had seemed to her at first; the confidence which had seemed to efface recollection of his impressive peculiarities and of whatever amusement or ridicule they had excited formerly during his calls at her aunt's house; which had seemed to foster indifference to the view her aunt or others might take of her encouragement of the friendship of this man, and which had seemed, on the whole, to yield a sort of consolation for real or fancied disappointments or repressions of the past; the confidence which had caused her to return unmovedly the surprised glances of her friend, Alice Dow, who by chance had met her in da Veiga's company on the Avenue—the Dows not having yet gone to their country house in the Orange Mountains; the enmeshing, engrossing confidence into

which she had felt herself slipping under the power of his unfaltering devotion and her own restless desires.

However lighted by these swift flashes of recollection, her brain still felt sluggish and oppressed, and at the end recurred inevitably the same old torturing question as to the time when that other woman had troubled his existence. She tried to form an approximate idea. It could not have been the year previous, for then he was in South America, fighting in border wars. It could not have been the year before that. He had not been in Europe for five or six years, perhaps, except when on his way up from the Argentine—the roundabout route by which travelers usually came to the United States—in the February not yet six months past. It could not have been then, for he had not loitered in Paris. He had brought the Severino Gonzalez letter very speedily to her Aunt Ester. She remembered her Aunt Ester said so. Besides, he could not—no, he could not. . . . It was six years past, and the woman was dead and she must not be recalled. Five-year graves held only skeletons. She must forget.

Looking down into the street again she saw loitering there the woman she had seen some time before; loitering and looking up at the building.

X

It occurred to her finally that it must be late and that, although she felt no sensation of hunger, it must be long past the dinner hour. Since dusk she had been lying on a small couch in the drawing-room bow window. Da Veiga had not come yet, although he had said particularly that he should be home early.

With a faint instinct of alarm she got up and lighted the gas, and at that moment was relieved to hear the apartment bell rung from the street entrance hall. As she went through to the kitchen to press the servant's button she noticed by the dining-room

clock that it was midnight. The elevator had stopped running and da Veiga would have to climb to the fifth floor. It was his ring, double and long continued. He had his key, but he wished to let her know that he had arrived and was ascending very slowly, sitting down at the foot of each flight to rest and recover his breath. She took matches and went into the passage to open the door leading to the outer hall, where, doubtless, the lights were low. As her hand turned the knob something on the carpet at her feet attracted her attention. She stooped and picked up a letter, which apparently had been slipped under the door. She went back, stood under the gas and read the address—"Mrs. da Veiga." The scratchy, almost trembling writing looked so out of place on the good, thick linen paper that it suggested the hand of a menial. She tore open the envelope with uncomfortable premonitory sensations; it must be that the Swedish servant was going to be disagreeably in haste about the balance due her. The contents were brief:

A lady who must see Mrs. da Veiga on a private and important matter will call to-morrow at three precisely, and would request Mrs. da Veiga to meet her at the entrance of her house. As a matter of justice to one of her own sex this note should not be mentioned to *anyone* or *anyone* be informed of the appointment.

And below, as an afterthought:

If this is mentioned to *anyone* you may be prevented learning in time what you will later regret not having learned.

Refolding the sheet she placed it carefully in her bosom. She had read it twice, and now she heard da Veiga coming up the fourth and last flight. "*Hijo de—*" he was muttering thickly and breathlessly when he caught sight of her. "Why you did not go and esleep, poor my darling?" he inquired, with much solicitude, and closed the door behind him not too softly.

"You are very late," said Alma, with a queer catch in her throat. She

was white and trembling from reading the anonymous note.

"I did want to come more early, and those peoples did make my stay." The heavy cane he carried fell out of his hand as he entered the drawing-room. "You did eat well, *querida*?" he questioned, as he arranged his hat, his cigarette case, his watch and a large envelope of papers severally and consecutively along the top of the piano.

Alma fell back from the arm he extended to encircle her. She moved farther across the room and stood looking at him over a chair.

"You might have let me know your intention to spend the evening as you did," she said, in a high, strange voice.

Da Veiga wheeled, and into his eyes came a startled expression. Her own had a light in them he had not seen before. There was silence, then Alma spoke again:

"The servant left at three. I have been alone for nine long hours, and I have had no dinner. If you had not said positively that you would come early——"

"Why you did let that big Swedie go out?" he thundered, with sudden anger. Then his voice dropped. "Poor my darling! And you 'ave not eat? Come with my, *querida*; I make one fine *cena*. On those immortal field of battle, in those graty wars, man' times we soldiers build those fire and make that coffee. But frest I put my slippers and my dress' gown."

She lingered some moments after he had gone out to the kitchen, and heard him striking matches, searching the ice-box in the butler's pantry and banging the gas range with the tea-kettle and other utensils in untutored, masculine manner until, her resentment melting to amusement, she had to follow out.

A savory smell pervaded the place. Señor da Veiga was smiling at the results of his labors. Meat and drink were actually preparing, as at a magician's touch. It only remained to lay a cloth in the dining-room.

The amusement of da Veiga increased. "That Swedie 'ave no key," he said, after a bit, shaking with laughter. "She 'ave no key to ope' that door outside. She stay cry there all the night."

"Why, I thought you understood," said Alma. "She is not coming back. She gave warning. She went to take care of someone who is sick—a cousin. She told me you had not paid her—for three months—since she came to work. I gave her twenty-five dollars—" She broke off, annoyed at the thought of the anonymous letter.

Da Veiga's laughter ceased abruptly. "You did pay to 'er? You are one fool! What right she 'ad to go 'way?"

As Alma was silent he said no further word, and when they presently sat down to sup he seemed again in very good humor.

"Now, my darling, we eat. Though I come late, yet so we eat well. *Querida*, give to my the big what you call *faca*—I cut the steak. And while we eat I tell to you, my darling, 'ow those peoples did make my to stay there at Delmonico's until near eight, and then they did make my to go to the 'ouse of one judge that will to buy some stock in our companeeeah. And there I talk to them like one *diablo*. To-day, *querida*, I 'ave take one office down town. I 'ave pay rent and buy carpet and desk and table and sofa. I 'ave spent motch money." He divided the steak slowly in two unequal portions, passed a plate to Alma and sighed. "Tomorrow I did think to pay the rent, for we stay yet one month in this place. Then I did think for we go to Paris in that graty Exesposition. You see by those days my companeeeah 'as begun; those ships 'ave gone to load with that beautiful concha—what you call *madreperla*. I close my office or I leave one boy. We go in that graty Fair." He got up and went to the ice-box for ice. "'Ere is vare warm," he said, and took his seat again, after emptying his glass. "'Ere is vare warm," he

repeated, as he cut deeper into the larger portion of meat on his own plate. Alma, watching with fascinated eyes, wondered if it could be possible he had really tasted anything since morning. She made no movement to take food, but presently began to pour the coffee. After this she watched him again, until he caught her eye and shouted at her: "Why you not eat?" She started, and clasped her hands on her bosom. "What is that?" he demanded.

"Something — nothing — a little pain," she stammered. "It seemed to stab me. It is gone." The sharp corner of the stiff envelope of the letter in her bosom had reminded her. Should she speak of it now or wait until morning?

He went on telling his plans. "Tomorrow, *querida*, I must go early down town. I do motch business. I sell some shares of my stock. I am vare sad that I most sell that, but I most 'ave money for we pay exespenses. You see I did put last month motch capital, I did exespend man' 'under' dollars. I did send man' cablegramas to South America. Gradill did I exespend to make sure my concession. Now I most sell. *Querida*, if you 'ave not give that ooglie Swedie those twenty-five dollars, I borrow from you and I borrow more seventy-five from one friend, one vare nice man, and so I 'ave not to sell that stock. But now it is too late." He reached for his coffee and put a great many lumps of sugar into the cup. "You did give to 'er all you did 'ave? Not is so, *querida*?"

"Oh, there is a little car-fare left, perhaps ten dollars," said Alma, jerkily.

Da Veiga drew another deep sigh and kept silence. Alma, sipping her coffee, gazed at her plate. She felt too worn with the day's mental experiences to discuss any subject, momentous or trivial. As for the anonymous letter, there would be time enough in the morning. If the Swede had complaint to make, let her

come in person and with less mystery.

"No," cried da Veiga, suddenly, and in a very resolute tone, "no, *querida*, I will not to take from you that little moneys. I sell my stock. Already I did borrow—'ow motch I did borrow, *querida*? When we did marry you did just 'ave receive your moneys. Not is so? One 'under' and fifty dollars! Now you will not 'ave more one 'under' and fifty until one month—maybe more long. Poor my darling! I fill shame I did borrow for we pay some bills." His plate was quite empty, and he reached for more coffee. "I go to get my cigarette 'older," he murmured, in melodious tones, and rose rather heavily. But Alma did not stir. She seemed to find fascination in the plate before her. Perhaps she was considering the strangeness of this honeymoon. Da Veiga came back and sat leaning an arm on the table while he smoked and finished his coffee.

"To-day, my darling," he said, presently, "I did pace by that 'ouse of your aunt. What fine 'ouse, and all shut up! I did think to myself what pity she is one such old *diablo*. *Querida*, why you don' try make frien'ship with your aunt, and so you get some moneys from 'er for we not sell our stock? *Querida*, I fill surry to sell those stock, which should be more thousands dollars. Your aunt is one rich woman—what she miss for give two 'under' fifty, maybe three 'under' or six 'under' dollars, and take your note? Not is so, *querida*? Then we go in that graty steamer next week."

It seemed to Alma she must be breathing very audibly. She had a feeling of extreme exhaustion. It seemed a tremendous effort to draw in her breath or expel it. To form words was still more difficult. They fell slowly from her lips: "You say the house is shut. My aunt is away. It would be hard to communicate with her."

"Why you cannot write one letter?"

She moved back her chair sharply

and rose. Standing so for an instant she caught sight of a white face and a white-gowned figure in the glass of the antique sideboard. The face, as colorless as the gown, had eyes more black and angry than she had ever seen. And it was her own face. "If I must borrow money," she said, in a voice that vibrated strangely, "it shall be from a stranger rather than from any relative." Then she went quickly from the room.

XI

It was lacking a minute of three when she stepped from the elevator and went toward the street. The great entrance doors swung noiselessly before and after her. She lifted her eyes from the hem of her gray cloth gown where she fancied a stray thread had caught, and saw coming up the steps the woman she had seen from her drawing-room window the day before loitering on the opposite side and glancing up. She felt positive at once that this was the person.

"You were looking for me—for Mrs. da Veiga?" she said.

The woman had reached the top step and paused to breathe for a few seconds. Alma's perceptions, quickened rather than sluggish, as on the previous afternoon, seized swiftly on certain points of her appearance. For one thing, the shabbiness of the woman now appeared more a shabbiness of gait and manner than of attire; for another, her tall and somewhat angular form was plainly quivering with excitement and vindictive purpose; so plainly, indeed, that the answer she presently gave seemed mild unto falsity: "I was looking for a lady of that name."

"Will you come up to my apartment?" said Alma, more coldly; "I am quite alone."

No further words passed between them until they had gone up in the elevator and Alma had led the way to her drawing-room. The woman did not sit at once. She walked over

to the bow window, stood there, and holding up a pair of eyeglasses that hung on a cord round her neck, took a long look at a crayon portrait of da Veiga above the piano. Then she sat down on the little sofa.

"You have no idea, I suppose, what I wish to speak to you about?" she began, in a slow, hard voice, as if she were arming herself with insolence now that she had gained entrance and audience.

Alma's reply was not of a kind to encourage. "I presume it was you who wrote to me. I suppose it is something about the servant that left yesterday. Of course, as she gave no notice——"

The woman threw out one long arm with a gesture of contempt approaching coarseness. "Your servant!" she cried. "You kept a servant! Well, I wonder who paid her! About a servant, eh? Do you know who I am? I am a victim—a dupe—" She sprang to her feet and flung out her other arm toward the picture over the piano—"the dupe—one of the dupes of that—that scoundrel! And you—you are another."

Alma sat very still in the large armchair—da Veiga's favorite chair—at the opposite side of the room. She was conscious, presently, of an arranged feeling, stiff and woodenish, such as she had felt as a child in a photograph gallery posing for her picture. She was cold, too; her hands were quite cold and her whole body seemed transfixed. It was like a nightmare she had experienced once, when she wanted to speak, to move, to cry out, and yet could not. She remembered that she had known that was a nightmare, and had seen with open eyes all objects in the room—just as she now saw the veriest unimportant things—the thread on the bottom of her gown which she had meant to pick off down in the entrance hall; the spot that might be ink—or wine—on her cuff; the atom of dust on the glass of the tiny watch in her parasol handle. And then she heard the woman's voice again, this time less strident.

"I don't wish to get excited; I generally know how to control my feelings. And besides, you are to be pitied as much as anyone. If you thought you were not married you'd be sorry at first, perhaps; but after a while you might be sorrier if you really were tied to him. I don't know if that's any consolation. In any case, our positions are about equal. For, even if that woman he represented to me to be in Europe had died before the church ceremony at All Asphodels', my interests as common-law wife will be protected. The law is just. He never once gave up his home with me. On the night of that wedding he was with me."

She paused as if expecting the girl to cry out. But Alma neither spoke nor stirred. Her pale face was expressionless. And the other went on, with a contraction of the mouth muscles and a moistening of her parched lips: "Yes, on the night of that wedding. Of course, I only knew what he told me when he came in—came home at seven. Said a cousin of his—a second cousin, who happened to be a namesake—had arrived in this country and had married an heiress. He had met him at the Consulate, and it had been a great surprise. He had had to go to the church and a wedding breakfast afterward, and he had kissed the bride, though she was nothing as to looks. He told what they had eaten and drunk at the breakfast and everything else to me, and said he hadn't enjoyed it without me. He had wished I was there, and was so glad to get home and take off his coat and drink coffee. He would spend the evening quietly with me, from seven till nearly eleven; then he had promised to go and sleep at the apartment his cousin had taken and furnished, while the bridal couple went to Washington on their wedding trip. He was kinder and more affectionate than usual, and kept talking about our being married by a minister in the Fall. He never left me until eleven; then he was sleepy and tired, and grumbled because he had to get up from the bed where he was

having a nap so comfortably and go out again. It is hard for me to imagine what excuse a man could possibly make to a bride for such an absence at such a time or for returning in such a temper."

She laughed, and the laugh was not a good one to hear. The sound jarred on Alma with such force as partially to break the nightmare spell and restore power of utterance. "Who are you?" she asked, faintly.

"Who am I?" the woman cried, with fresh fury. "Who am I? I am the woman that found him sick and starving in Paris, that nursed him through a long, terrible fever; that never left him night or day; that came back to New York in the steerage—you hear?—the *steerage* of the ship, in order to have money to bring him with me; the woman that he vowed by his dead mother's grave to honor and protect. You want to know my name? It is Barbara—he calls me Bébé—well, just as much Barbara da Veiga as yours is Alma da Veiga." Again she paused and seemed to expect some outburst, but none came. "That's the name I'm known by over there in Twenty-fourth street," she went on. "They pronounce it Veega. That was his home there with me, in Twenty-fourth street, near Eighth avenue. Perhaps you know the neighborhood. It is quiet and decent; there are theatrical people, but not the bad kind. He lived there until this marriage—*of his cousin*—a few weeks ago. After that he explained to me he would have to sleep at their apartment—so that they might be able to testify to his blameless character when he began his suit against his first wife in the Autumn. But he spent his afternoons and evenings at home as usual. It was comfortable—he liked to be there. I got home as early as I could. We had two large rooms on the second floor—it is a furnished-room house. In the front room are his desk and the sofa, and there is a large alcove off with the bed. In the back room we had a table and a gas stove. Between the rooms are two closets with running water and an ice-

box. Two people can live very comfortably in that way. I had the walls all covered with pretty pictures. Then it was very convenient—the running water and all. One could save a great deal by washing handkerchiefs and small things. That night after he had gone—that *wedding* night—I felt so lonely I stayed up till two o'clock, and washed and ironed so many little articles for him." Yet again she paused and waited—and went on: "It was mere chance that my suspicions were aroused by a man following him there to collect a bill—rent, for this very apartment, too. I happened to be at home. I am a forewoman. Two people have two mouths to feed, and there are clothing and other expenses. I was home, and the man let out something about being tired of calling and being put off by da Veiga or told that he wasn't at home. 'In a few days,' he said, 'if that rent isn't paid you will get notice to vacate.' Nine hundred a year! A good rent for a man without a penny of income! You see now his true character."

Alma leaned forward and cried out—a queer, guttural, gasping cry. Then she found she could speak.

"I wish," she said, distinctly, "that you would leave this room at once. I have read of such creatures as you—and their lies."

The other woman sprang to her feet, hesitated and sat down again. "I am not going yet. There is more for you to hear, and you had better hear it."

Alma had turned her face away; she turned it back now and looked at this other—this angular, flaxen-haired, keen-eyed woman with large nose and pale lips, who had come with him from Europe, who had found him starving and dying, who had nursed him through terrible illness, who had traveled in the steerage, who had been with him for four long hours on his wedding night. A great chill was beginning to shake her. She remembered so well his absence during those hours—how he accounted for it by the story of a countryman,

recently arrived, who could speak no English, who had been arrested by mistake, and had sent for him to get him liberated; how he had returned at eleven, how strange and indifferent his conduct had been, and how he had let her retire and sat smoking his cigarettes long after midnight on his wedding night! The chill shook her from head to foot. She remembered the story of Don Ernesto, who had married the daughter of the President of a republic in South America—the gossip about his spending his wedding night with the Indian woman, Maria, and her children, and his having married Doña Elvira merely to stand firm with her father and succeed him in the Presidency—the story that had seemed so detestable to her innocent wisdom and wise innocence of fifteen. The chill was followed by a sort of moral nausea, in some great spasm of which she felt that she might easily eject the heart from her body.

"The sooner you know all the truth the better," the woman persisted; "the main thing is, where is that first wife?"

"Whom—what do you mean by 'first wife?'" asked Alma, in a thick voice.

"I mean the Englishwoman he married a few years ago in London. She owned some property, but she was shrewd. What did she want with a penniless adventurer whose only occupation was flirtations with other women? She left him, you understand. Nobody cared for him—nobody wanted him. That was how I had pity for him. I thought he would reform and make a good Christian man if he had a chance. It wasn't that I wanted anyone's husband. He was alone, adrift in the world. I gave him shelter and help. Has anyone but me a right to him? Has anyone else done as much for him? Has he got any money out of you yet—or out of your relatives? You are the heiress, I suppose. Perhaps he has tried and not succeeded. As for that other woman—he has her picture somewhere here in this very apartment. He told me that he hated her so that he spat on her portrait and cut it

with a knife, and finally put his own in front of it in the same frame. I think it is that one on the piano. Do you mind if I take it down and see if it is there?"

"Why should I mind what you do?" asked Alma, in the same thick voice, and shivering as she spoke.

The woman looked round the room. "I can stand on that thing; I suppose it's the piano stool," she said, in a matter-of-fact way; "I am tall enough."

Still Alma did not move. Her white face was turned toward the other, who had climbed up and was leaning over against the piano top and lifting the heavy frame. The wire fell easily from the gilt hook on the moulding. "It will take only a moment to see," she said, and as she spoke she knelt on the Indian rug before the piano, pulling the little nails from the back of the frame. The board fell out softly on the rug, and following the board came a picture that was not the crayon of da Veiga. It was an old-fashioned photograph enlarged in water colors. She held it up triumphantly.

"You see how he cut and gashed it," she said. "But it is the woman—his wife. On the bottom of it, here, is the name, Maria da Veiga. Do you want to look at it closer? What's the matter? You ain't fainting, are you?"

Alma's head had fallen back in the chair. Her face was pallid and her eyes closed. "No," she said, feebly, "I am not—fainting. But—I see no good in discussing—these matters. I shall be glad if you will excuse me now." She got up as she spoke the last word, staggered into the bedroom and fell on the bed. Her hat fell off, and she sat up again, holding her parasol tightly, like a drunken person who would not give up. She heard the woman putting up the picture. And after what might have been seconds or moments or hours, for all that she could tell, she heard her ask if she wanted a glass of water or brandy or anything. And after another indefinite period she heard

the outer door of the apartment close with a loud sound.

She sat up in a sort of ringing silence and listened as if afraid the woman might return. After a little she got off the bed and looked out into the drawing-room; the picture hung in its accustomed place, and she wondered if it could all have been an ugly dream. She advanced a few steps and saw on the rug slivers of wood that had come from the board back of the picture, together with two small nails. Stooping, she picked up these and carried them out to the kitchen. Then she came back, took a long look round the room and fell to the floor by the little sofa.

XII

SHE was walking faster than she had ever before walked in her life. She had put on her sailor hat again, which had fallen off when she fell on the bed, and she carried the parasol with the watch in the handle. It was after six, and the last train by which she might have gone to seek her aunt at the seaside had left at half-past four. She was not sure what she meant to do, except that she would not pass the night in the apartment. She thought she would go to a hotel. But first she would make certain that the woman had told the truth. She would go to Twenty-fourth street and find the place.

Her entire body seemed on fire. She felt like one floating through a field of flame. If the woman had spoken untruths—but there were such horrid symptoms of truth! The wedding night, the coming from Europe, the defaced picture back of his own picture! How could that woman have invented suggestions about his trying to get money from—her relatives? It seemed to her that she flew on her way in a sort of sirocco. It was a close, humid August night, but she was hot with dry fever heat—the suffocating heat of anger, bit-

ter, impotent, raging anger, like that of a child locked in a room. Where was he at that moment? Was he over there in Twenty-fourth street—with the very woman who had denounced him? Why had she not made the woman say if she still intended to—protect and succor him? She flew on across the square, across Broadway. She did not know or care whether she passed one person or a thousand persons. She was soon in Twenty-fourth street, a street of queer inhabitants. The sidewalks were crowded with loiterers, but she saw none clearly. Under the elevated railway and on through the next block and on into the next she flew. And there she stopped, suddenly remembering the woman had not told her the house number. She must inquire at every door in the block. She leaned against a railing for a moment, then went on, then stopped again. On the opposite side, farther down, almost at the end, coming slowly along, pausing, turning, ascending the steps, opening the door with a latchkey, she saw da Veiga. There was no mistaking his figure and carriage.

At that instant she felt as if her body were being compressed in one of those old sixteenth century instruments of torture that she had seen in pictures.

After a long while she went on across the block, looking up at the second-story windows of that house, with their old-fashioned green slat shutters. She got aboard a car, and by-and-bye saw that she was at Fifty-ninth street, near the Park. Alighting, she went into the Park. It was still quite light. She walked through to Fifth Avenue and kept on eastward. Before long she found herself on the elevated railway, riding southward again. She rode to the end, got off and took a boat that went some place where it was brighter and noisier than at the South Ferry. She came back in the same boat and traveled up to Forty-second street. The next she knew she was at the Grand Central Station, caught in a swarm-

ing crowd that had just come from some train.

The stream swirled her over across the street to a hotel entrance, and she went in and up to the parlor. While the boy had gone to get a card for her to register she sat where she could see herself in a mirror. Through all her mental confusion the instinct of gentility impressed her with the necessity that her hat should be properly adjusted, her hair neatly arranged and her expression composed. The flush in her face was but natural in the intense Midsummer heat. Other instincts—largely of self-preservation, perhaps—caused her to write her name "Mrs. A. Sylvester" and for address merely "City."

The room assigned her was small, with one window giving on an inner court. It was not very high up, and kitchen sounds ascended incessantly. The heat was great. She had an idea that if she turned out the gas, removed her clothing and lay down on the bed she might feel calmer. The night was before her in which to think out what to do and prepare herself to do it. Thus far she saw but one course—to confront him with what she had heard and insist on knowing the truth. Had he ever married any other woman? Who and what was Maria da Veiga? What rights, if any, had Barbara da Veiga? Was there such a person as Alma da Veiga? These questions must all be settled. Until she had his reply to them she would do nothing rash. She was glad there had been no train to the seaside. She felt that she did not wish to go to her aunt until she had heard his answer. In the morning she would go back to the apartment and confront him—"confront" was precisely the word. It gave her a sense of resoluteness to repeat it. She wished she could sleep all night and waken strong and composed in the morning, but the heat was intolerable. She tossed from side to side as the hours wore on toward midnight, and wondered if he had yet arrived at the apartment and found her gone. She won-

dered what he would do; would he make any outcry—ask any questions of anyone? Would he have already been told by the woman Barbara that Alma had learned such things from her? Would he be waiting her return? Would he go out to look for her? What would he say in the morning when she returned? What should she first say to him? Suppose he should break down and confess that this horrible thing was true—that he had been married before and that his wife was in Europe? What must she do then? Must she go to her Aunt Sevenbanks—or first to a lawyer? Should she ask for a divorce or for an annulment of her marriage? How could it be kept secret? How could the frightful and intolerable vulgarity of newspaper publicity be avoided? How could she escape seeing her name in print? Would the lawyer advise her to go to Dakota? She closed her eyes and breathed hard. If sleep would only come!

With her eyes shut she seemed to see everywhere the letter "D" blazing at her—and sometimes the word "Dakota," and sometimes the word "divorce." Once worn to exhaustion she seemed to have sunk out of the heat into darkness—the darkness of a cool and illimitable tropical wood. She was a child again, lost in that equatorial forest as once when she was five years old. And Pepe and Chavela, the servants, were searching as then for her, half-crazed at their own negligence. And she was afraid of the darkness and was praying, as she had often heard Chavela pray to the Holy Virgin, to bring someone to find her; and a huge form came out of the shadow of a tree, a horrible shape of wild beast lifting a tremendous paw like a bear's with which to fell her to the ground; and the head seemed to turn strangely familiar, and the eyes became da Veiga's eyes. And she awoke, gasping.

She lay down again, for it was only two o'clock by the parasol watch. Other little intervals of dozing came

to her. Sometimes she saw the interior of those Twenty-fourth street rooms. Da Veiga was there at ease in slippers and smoking jacket. The woman, Barbara, was darning socks for him. Sometimes she was in a court of law, with greedy eyes devouring her, newspaper artists sketching her, a lawyer questioning her, and the judge's voice, deciding deliberately, and in a tone that terrified her: "The marriage is null and void." Sometimes she saw her Aunt Sevenbanks, bowed, silent, overwhelmed with disgrace. Then the woman Barbara would reappear, tall, angular, keen-eyed and large-nosed, resolute and self-justifying. "Who else wanted him? I succored him. Who else had a right to him?" Sometimes huge heads seemed thrusting themselves against her, half-human, with under lips distorted by inserted bits of stone or bone. And a hoarse whisper, issuing from nowhere, yet everywhere, proclaimed, "The Bugres—that live on their fellow men—the devourers of their kind—the Bugres." And again she was sinking in dark waters over which black boats were floating, with white sails made from huge newspapers printed in enormous type, with the words "Dakota" and "divorce" everywhere.

Toward daybreak she might have slept an hour or two, dreaming then a curious medley of comedy and tragedy in which her Aunt Ester and her Aunt Sevenbanks, da Veiga and Barbara, herself and the Swedish servant were paired in a sort of procession, until running toward them at great speed came the woman of the gashed portrait, wringing her hands and sobbing that her face had been destroyed. Then Alma sat up in bed and looked at the window. It was daylight, and an unbearable clatter of dishes came up from the restaurant kitchen. She reached for the parasol and saw that it was six o'clock. She rose and dressed. She had no comb or brush, but smoothing the sides of her hair with her hands she found that her hat would

cover the worst of her disarray. Her face looked swollen even after much cold water, but she took special pains with her collar and cuffs. The servants were astir in the halls, but she met no one else as she went out. She knew that the outside doors of the apartment house would be open, and if the elevator were not yet running, so much the better. She could enter unobserved and walk up stairs. The morning air was cool and refreshing, and her strength and courage returned.

She ran up the stairway so lightly that she was hardly out of breath at all when she opened the apartment door with her key and walked down the passage. The gas was burning, as it had probably burned all night, in the drawing-room. In the dining-room the rising sun was glaring on everything, and full in the glare, at the table, in his accustomed place, with a cup of black coffee before him and his cigarette holder in his mouth, in *négligé*, as usual, and smoking and shedding slow tears, sat da Veiga. He sat still and looked at her; then suddenly he uttered a loud wail of interrogation:

"With what man you did go 'way?"

XIII

SHE crossed the room and sat down facing him. Her glance then fell on another object—his razor, half-open, on the table—and her first words were commonplace. "You were going to shave?"

He answered with the cigarette holder in his mouth: "I did think to cut my throat; then I did think to wait and see." He drew a sobbing breath. "I never did think my wife to go and leave my."

"When you say 'wife,'" said Alma, with a composure that was like a numbness, "to whom do you refer? Myself, or one of the other two? Is it Barbara—or is it the woman whose picture is in there?"

Da Veiga seemed not to have understood. He gazed at her with eyes

in which a dark flame was kindling. "You look vare fine," he said, with a dull sort of fury; "vare nice you look, with that white, small 'at and those red mouth. Nice little parasol with one watch—all so fine. Why did you come back?" The fury increased. "Why did you come back?" he shouted, with a look of hatred.

"You have not answered my question," said Alma, ignoring his temper. "Perhaps you did not understand me—it is foolish to say insulting things. You know perfectly well why I left this house last night and went alone to a hotel. The woman who calls herself Barbara da Veiga must have told you she was here yesterday afternoon and that she informed me I was not your wife. You could not expect me to remain after that. I had not intended to return, but it seemed only right to give you a chance to defend yourself. In any event, it will be for my lawyer to look into the matter at once. The record of any marriage between yourself and the Maria da Veiga whose portrait hangs behind your own—"

He sprang up with an imprecation.

"Who did tell to you—?"

"She says you call her Bébé—"

"That *diablo*! Oh—" He fell into his seat again. "*Querida*, I did wish to confess all to you. I did tell to you 'ow she will that I marry with 'er and 'ow she try to make my live always with 'er. I did tell to you that she care for my when I 'ave one *fièvre* and did come with my from Paris. I 'ave try so 'ard to break from 'er—I 'ave give 'er money—vare motch moneys 'ave I give. All that I can do to 'er for make we separate good friends. Still, she is one *diablo*. She write to my, she come, she 'ang on my back. Now she try for make my wife to leave my. I did tell to 'er long months past, when we did come in that graty ship, I did tell to 'er I cannot marry with 'er. I did tell 'er one lie—'ow I did 'ave already one wife. I did show to 'er one picture of one lady in that Argentine—one lady did marry with my cousin. I did say that was my wife, Maria.

Querida, I am one poor man, vare sad, with motch troubles. I did try so 'ard, and I did think she let my be. She is 'one old woman, with one big nose; vare ooglie is she, and I never did love 'er. Man' letters I receive from 'er and she baig and baig I go there. I go yesterday and she say she go 'way—in Europa, and she want money. I 'ave to give to 'er motch money. Now I am poor—I need for we pay exespenses. 'Ow I can give to 'er that money for to go in Europa?" Fresh tears came to his eyes. "All I 'ave pray for in this world is for we live 'appy and good. I did tell you, *querida*, 'ow I did do motch wickedness, and now I do no more. Last night I did read in my *libro de devociones*, as my mother did tell to me, and I did pray to 'eaven to bring back my wife."

Alma rose and went into the drawing-room and turned out the gas. He followed and watched her. She went on into the bedroom, took off her hat and the bodice of her dress and put on a dressing sacque, then began to comb her hair. He followed and sat on the bed. "You will not speak to my, *querida*?" he inquired, piteously.

"I have nothing to say just at present," she answered, and went on combing her hair. She was not quite sure what she thought of his explanations. She was still suffering moral nausea, though not as intensely as the day before. One of the two had told falsehoods; there was untruth on one side or the other, even if the tragic aspect were eliminated and his fault reduced to a simple, ugly intrigue of the past with the woman Barbara. She felt a natural hatred for this woman, who had caused her such night-long suffering, and still her sense of justice framed excuses for the poor creature.

"I am vare sad, *querida*," said da Veiga, mournfully, "that I did tell to you one lie."

"One lie?" She gave the numeral emphasis. She was still brushing her hair. It seemed to her there had never been so many tangles in it. She turned to look at him.

"I did tell to you that she was dead. I am vare sad. I should tell to you she write to my and worry my man' times. Now you will not believe. But I prove to you."

"Yes," said Alma, "I shall require proof." She felt a sort of regret that she could be so unmoved; she knew from this that she had no love, nothing but pity for him. "I shall require proof," she repeated, "that I have a right to remain here; proof that you never have married any other woman. You must satisfy me of that." She had finished brushing her hair, and was coiling it at the back of her head. "You might pour me a cup of coffee," she added.

Da Veiga got up from the bed and preceded her back to the dining-room. She saw that he still carried the razor with him, and remarked that he would better put it away unless he meant to shave at once.

Two hours later she sat alone again. He had gone down town to try to realize something on his pearl fishery concession stock. He had reiterated his sore need of money for current expenses and also to give the woman, so that she would go abroad and leave them in peace.

Alma sat reflecting and trying to decide on a course of action. Should she try to get an advance from the lawyer—her aunt's man of business—who had charge of her own small quarterly income? Supposing she obtained sufficient for the woman, Barbara—she wondered how much would be required. A queer pity was in her heart for da Veiga, inspired in great measure by his financial distress. It seemed to her that however great his fault, she could not desert him just now.

With a sudden sensation of exhaustion she lay down and slept. She did not wake until he came home.

XIV

SHE had once before had occasion to go alone to call on the lawyer, whose office was in lower Broadway.

That other time she had been driven down in her aunt's coupé—it was Winter—and she had had only to go up in the elevator and send in her card to Mr. Travis. This time there was no coupé, but a tiresome walk from the City Hall station. The trucks and the cable cars were thick, and the men on the sidewalks jostled and elbowed her, and were altogether brutes. She felt flushed and cross by the time she reached the office. But Travis having not yet returned from luncheon, she had to wait awhile in his private room, and when he finally arrived she was much cooler. He was a tall, lank man with a beard and a melancholy smile, but he sighed contentedly like one of honest intentions.

"Good morning, Miss Sylves—oh, I beg your pardon, you married a Spaniard—de—de——"

"South American," she corrected. "My name is da Veiga."

He smiled tranquilly. "Rather informal, though, wasn't it? I mean, you didn't go in for any of the fashionable nonsense that uses up so much money these hard times."

"Quite true," she answered, with calm indifference. "Speaking of money, Mr. Travis, that is what I came down for. I want some—ahead of time, you know; that is, if I can get it."

The lawyer lifted his eyebrows. "Why—" he said, in a vague tone.

"It can be managed in some way, can't it?" she insisted, with a little impatience. "You see, if one wanted to go over to Paris, for example, it would cost a trifle. Señor da Veiga," she colored slightly, "has not much to spare just now. He is engrossed heart and soul and pocketbook in the new company he has organized. A pearl fishery company, you know. It is going to be a great——"

"Pearl fishery? Where?" The lawyer was interested.

"Why, South America—an island off the coast—he came to New York to form the company."

"Incorporated?" the gentleman inquired.

She hesitated. "I believe so."

Mr. Travis leaned his elbow on his desk and rested his face on his palm. He regarded her with eyes of mild scrutiny. "Well, then," he observed, "you didn't do so badly, after all, did you? I had an idea you married one of those—well, usual foreign counts, you know. There *was* a title, wasn't there?"

"Señor da Veiga inherits a title," said Alma, with a little girlish stiffness. "But he is an ardent republican. We never use it. Count Geraldina is the title," she added.

"Geraldina." The lawyer repeated the name in a meditative way. The melancholy expression unhidden by his beard gave no clue to his thoughts. He might have been considering irrelevant questions, or he might have been smiling inwardly at the symptoms so familiar to the practiced eye and ear, so misleading to others. He could have told of so many cases where the devotion was most aggressively apparent, the attachment most strenuously insisted on, the excess—or access—of loyalty most vividly displayed on the very eve of the tragic *dénouement*—of the skeleton's discovery. "Well," he said, suddenly, "and you want some money to waste in Paris? By the way, I haven't inquired how Mrs. Sevenbanks is—and that reminds me, I have a letter here for you, from Paris, I think. It has been here some time." He got up and went to a small safe. Alma kept silence until he had finished with the combination. Then she said, frankly enough, "You know my Aunt Sevenbanks did not approve of my marriage, and I have not seen her since that time. She is at the seashore, I suppose."

He closed the safe, came back and handed her a letter. The blood crept into her face at the superscription. "From my aunt, Mrs. Harding—addressed to my maiden name—I suppose she forgot—she must have heard—with your permission." She tore open the envelope nervously. There were but a few lines in the neat, Spanish hand, assuring "dearest

Alma" that if she felt like coming across to join the writer she would be most welcome at any instant, and to be sure to write. But there was also a draft for a hundred and fifty dollars. "Perhaps after all I shall not need the advance I came to ask for," said Alma, showing him the draft.

He cleared his throat. "Now that was thoughtful of her. But this pearl fishing company that you spoke of. I wonder if I know any of the men in it. Who are the directors? I suppose it is no secret."

Alma remembered there was a Mr. Deane.

"Not Wilson Deane? I know him well. But he has been in Europe these eight or ten months, at the baths—I forget which. It must be some other."

"No," she said, a little irritably, "I am sure it is Wilson Deane. And there is a Mr. Shellingworth and George Stone——"

"George Stone? I know him, too. Funny how quiet it has been kept! I generally hear a good deal about such things. The newspapers haven't got on to it."

"I don't know—I never read newspapers," said Alma. "They make one's arms ache so to hold them."

He laughed. "A new objection. I thought you were going to say they print such horrid crimes." His pensive gaze followed her movements reluctantly as she got up to go. "I am glad to have had the pleasure of seeing you and giving you that letter, and also to have learned about the—the enterprise that Señor da Veiga—is that right? I never can pronounce Spanish——"

"That's right," said Alma, with a smile that was not by any means care-free. He let her out direct by the private door and went back to his desk. Alone in the hall and unobserved, she stooped to refasten a shoelace. On her way to the elevator she had to pass the open door of the larger office. Travis was there talking with another gentleman, not his partner. They were laughing, with unlighted cigars in their mouths.

She wondered a little that the lawyer would care to talk freely with a man who kept his hat on and tipped it over on one side and used coarse language. "Hang it, Travis," she heard him say, "I tell you I never heard of the fellow or any such scheme. I believe it's all a fake."

She had to hurry to reach the bank before three o'clock. The teller knew her and there would be no delay. From the very instant of possessing the draft she had been resolved on a certain course—to go to the woman Barbara and offer her a hundred dollars with which to go abroad, and to give the other fifty to da Veiga. He had said that fifty would see him through until he got another remittance from South America—his coffee money. The only thing for their peace of mind, he had convinced her, was to have the woman Barbara on the other side of the ocean.

It was hardly four when she reached Twenty-fourth street. The servant who opened the door said that "Mrs. Veega" would soon be home, and there was a parlor to wait in. Alma had waited nearly an hour when the front door opened and the fair-haired Amazon came in.

"I wish to see you," said Alma, stepping into the hall. "May I go up stairs with you?" It flashed on her how oddly their positions were reversed since that other afternoon. But she was so full of her own plan that she did not mind.

"Oh, it's you?" The woman paused on the staircase. "Come up," she said, authoritatively.

When the door was closed Alma looked round the room. Everything was as it had been described to her: the desk, the alcove, the bed, the closets and the ice-box. Da Veiga's silver-handled umbrella stood in a corner. Under the desk was a pair of enormous slippers. This gave her a shock. There were pictures on the wall. The doors were open through to the other room, where were the dining-table and the gas stove. Everything was true.

Alma coughed faintly, to gain time. She lacked words for a beginning. The purse in her hand, in which she had separately the fifty and the hundred dollar rolls, felt a clumsy, brazen thing.

"I wondered," said Barbara, after her caller was seated, "how you treated him that night when he went back to your apartment." She smiled grimly. "He was here till quite late. I said nothing until he was leaving. Then I said, 'Yes, go to the other one now. Perhaps she'll give you a warmer reception—when she knows about your first marriage and what you owe to me.' He only laughed and answered, 'Bébé, you know well before God we are 'onorable. Not long off we marry in church. Then we live 'appy. Bébé, you are my all; you will not forsake my.' He did not come yesterday. I was afraid at moments that—that he might have killed you. The pistol is here, but then he had the razor."

Alma trembled for an instant. "Why should he harm me?" she asked. "I have never thought of being afraid. Besides, he gave me a satisfactory explanation."

"He gave you an explanation!" the other repeated, in a tone of amazement. "He told you—the first wife—is dead?"

Alma felt herself suffocating. She had gone beyond her depth—the water was closing over her head. She had not stopped to think of what she must say. Now she saw that the woman would demand to know all. How could she tell her there had never been any other wife—that he had invented a previous marriage story—that he—! There was nothing she could say. She paused and stammered: "I—am his legal wife; I—claim no other right—I have no doubt your moral claim is as strong. But you have turned against him, and my duty seems plain. I must not desert him—it is not a question of love. I made a mistake and I must bear the consequences. You hate him and want to be free from

him. I do not blame you, for he has acted wickedly toward you. It is no wonder you call him scoundrel and want to be far away from him. He told me of your wish to go to Europe, and I found I could help you a little—so I came." The words formed themselves with difficulty, and the purse seemed more brazen and shamelessly thick than before. "I came to bring you the money. It isn't much—a hundred dollars. You can go very nicely for eighty, I think. It is only giving you back a little of your own, you know—of what you have expended for him in the past, I mean. There is no use of trying to palliate his fault—no use even to discuss it. I shall only try to do my duty."

The woman had stood up and was looking down on her. "He told you—that I—wished to go to—Europe?" she repeated, slowly, with a faint, pale smile. "And that—I wanted money—to go—?"

Alma also rose. "Yes, he told me." She opened the purse and took out the larger roll. "I shall have more in a month," she said. "If I knew where to send it—I want to feel that you will not be in need. There are steamers to-morrow and Saturday." She held out the bills with an impulsive gesture.

The other fell back a step. "You come here to offer me money?—" there was a grinding sound in her utterance—"to offer me money?—" the reddish down on her cheeks and her reddish eyebrows stood out queerly over her dead-white face—"money to go to Europe? You, who haven't the shadow of right to the name of wife—come to buy me off—me who support him, who put bread in his mouth, life in his body—me who went to you and told you the truth as a friend and as woman to woman—you offer me money? I spit on your money and on you! I fling it back in your face—I defy you—I despise you—I drive you from my sight!"

The next that was clear to Alma's comprehension she was in the street,

a block away from the place. She was running quite fast—in one hand her purse, in the other the roll of bills. There was a pain in her shoulder and through her chest. The woman had struck her—had struck her a hard blow in that whirlwind of fury—the creature had actually struck her. The creature—Rufino was right—she was a *diablo*, and worse. Perhaps he was not so greatly at fault, after all. All this was vague and but half-acknowledged in her thoughts. She knew she had made some blunder in going there. “The creature would have taken the money from *him*,” she said to herself. “It was only because it was I. I was stupid—terribly stupid not to have foreseen. My shoulder—she struck me with her clenched hand—I shall remember.”

She had recovered from her dazed condition by the time she arrived at the apartment. Da Veiga was already there. She found him in the dining-room, smoking and drinking black coffee. “Where you did go, my love?” he asked, looking up at her with bloodshot eyes.

“To the lawyer,” she answered, after a moment of thought.

“You did get no money?” There was evidence of great strain in his voice.

“My Aunt Ester sent me a little. If it will be of any use, Rufino, I have fifty dollars.”

He fell forward on his knees at her feet. “Oh, my love, you save my life! I was near to despair. That man—my friend, ’e did go ’way; until two weeks ’e stay. My love, my own true wife!”

She handed him the purse; she had withheld the hundred-dollar roll and placed it in her pocket. She made no mention of it. Other emergencies might confront them, she now felt, and she desired to be prepared. After a little she saw da Veiga putting on his coat to go out, and she offered no word to stay him. She imagined he was going to take the money to that woman. Perhaps the

woman would accept it from *him*. Perhaps she would go to Europe, after all—or elsewhere. At any rate, there was nothing further Alma could think to do. She felt she was powerless and must merely let things happen.

XV

FILMY golden light steeped the level lands about the little railway station as a chattering party of seven descended from the parlor car. It was a good half-mile to the hotel, and the hotel stage seemed at the first glance inadequate. Yet laughingly, as the train pulled away and left them, the newcomers moved toward this smaller vehicle. A short, dark man, very correct in dress, escorted a stout lady of middle age and good-natured expression; two young ladies, one much fairer than the other, but clearly sisters; a youth, as precise in apparel as the gentleman ahead; finally another lady, in whose face a certain youthfulness lingered, accompanied by a gentleman of thirty or more, tall in figure and quiet mannered. The first and second couples conversed in words entirely unintelligible to the natives; the three that followed spoke English. The youth, who had a downy mustache and resembled his good-natured mamma, lingered back with the others. “Well,” he remarked, “this is all your doing, Mrs. Harding. We start for Saratoga, where we have many times found pleasure, and we find ourselves out in a strange country, a desert of cornfields.”

“Never mind, Pepito,” said Ester Harding, “you will not be sorry. You wished to go to Saratoga, which is hot and stupid. I persuade you to go to a cool place by the sea, is it not so, Don Roberto?” she turned to the tall gentleman, who bowed and smiled—“where there are beautiful young ladies who will dance with you at the casino.”

They were all nicely seated in the stage, filling it comfortably, when

someone came running out after them. It was the station-master. "Take this along with you," he cried to the driver. "Parcel for Mrs. Sevenbanks."

The whip cracked and they rolled off. "My sister-in-law is here, it seems," said Mrs. Harding, with an innocent look at the grave young man beside her. He made no reply, but appeared interested in the landscape.

Five minutes had carried them by the sleepy corn and vegetable gardens; five minutes more showed them the earlier and more modest houses; another five brought them to the "Corners," where the post office was filled with shirtwaist youths awaiting the afternoon mail. And now they drove slowly into the beautiful main avenue leading to the villas, the casino, the hotels, the dunes and the sea.

The hotel proprietor shone with joy. He remembered Mrs. Harding perfectly. She had spent two days there once. Why had she not wired? Perhaps Mrs. Sevenbanks expected them?

"On the contrary," said Mrs. Harding, "we shall surprise each other. I thought she had gone back to town. It was not she, my good Bailey, but your excellent hotel accommodations that drew me hither with my friends: Mr. and Mrs. Severino Gonzalez, Miss Mercedes Gonzalez, Miss Pacifica Gonzalez, Mr. Joseph Gonzalez and Mr. Roberto Vasquez. Also myself. You will please to register all these names, send us to the finest rooms, and soon, oh, very soon thereafter, summon us to a substantial repast. And it must be dinner. Do not mock us with the ambiguous fried potatoes—or, if they must be fried, see that they are French fried. We have appetites."

"*Que está diciendo?*" murmured the elder Gonzalez girl, blushing as her eyes met those of the tall Vasquez.

"Leave it to her," said young Pepito, in their own tongue. "She is giving him *confites*; she has talent."

Then they all disappeared up stairs

in the wake of the proprietor to select their various quarters.

Mrs. Harding did not await the dinner bell. She made hasty change of toilette and reappeared in the wide drawing-room. The proprietor was attentive to her inquiries and explained that Mrs. Sevenbanks had gone for a long drive, probably to the Shinnecock Hills. She might not return until very late. She was stopping quite alone at the hotel; her niece had not been with her this season. It had been a good season thus far. He understood the heat in town was extreme. Mrs. Sevenbanks was looking much better than when she had arrived. The poor lady had seemed far from strong. Someone had mentioned to him—he begged pardon for alluding to it—that her niece had married rather unsatisfactorily. He hoped it was mere gossip. Mrs. Harding smiled discreetly. There was some truth in the story, she admitted; still, all marriages were guesses. Who could predict? One must always make the best of it. One could always travel—unless one were very poor. The best plan was to travel and avoid scandal.

The Gonzalez girls now came stealing down the stairs and ventured out on the piazza. "We shall no doubt like it," the elder observed. "There is a beautiful view."

"The tennis court is of more importance," said the younger, "as long as mamma makes golf so hard for us, thinking she must accompany us every moment, and getting so tired." She was darker, plainer and less good tempered than her sister, despite her name, Pacifica. "Provided," she went on, "there are any young men here."

"There is Vasquez," the elder suggested, timidly.

"Vasquez, indeed! Can a marble statue play golf? He knows nothing but books and laws."

"Very likely. Otherwise he would never have held such high offices. *Chargé d'affaires*—"

"Of course, *Meches*, you adore him!"

"For heaven's sake, Chica! and I engaged to Gutierrez! What a temper!"

The bell rang in the dining hall with a great resonance, wholesomely cheerful. Footsteps and voices were heard.

XVI

MRS. HARDING had made herself as comfortable as she could in her room. The window shades were lifted and the great green slatted shutters half-drawn, so that one could see the tremendous moon rising late above the dunes. It was a still, sweet night; the scent of sea and of beach grasses came now and then like a delicate, ministering spirit. The boom of the ocean soothed her. She would have liked to doze, but that might not be, for she was expecting Mrs. Sevenbanks. The proprietor had informed her of that lady's return, and she had sent her card to her with a penciled "hoping for a few moments." She had drawn the red shade lower on the lamp, and just previous to ensconcing herself in one of the two large rocking-chairs, had set on the table a bottle with rich, red, sluggish contents. "A cordial," she had murmured, "for fear that quality may be lacking." Behind the bottle were two tiny glasses.

Would Mrs. Sevenbanks come? She yawned slightly. She would wait another half-hour, then, failing to—but at that instant there came the soft whisper of silken skirts, a delicate knock. "Enter!" she said, springing to her feet.

Mrs. Sevenbanks seemed to catch her breath faintly as she entered. "Ester Harding!" she cried, softly. She withdrew one of her hands from the other lady's clasp and pressed it to her side. She was dazzlingly pale of face, and, clad all in white, seemed wraith-like.

Mrs. Harding for the first time found her almost beautiful. "But you are looking very well," she exclaimed, drawing her nearer the

table and pressing her down into the other chair.

"I am better than I was," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, more steadily. "The sea air has given me strength. I was very bad."

"You were dreadfully pulled down, of course," responded Mrs. Harding. She was determined to have the painful part over as soon as possible. "It was a shock, I know——"

"Don't," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, faintly, again pressing her heart. "Please don't! I cannot endure——"

"But I am not going to say anything," the other persisted, "that is, anything that it would pain you to hear. Wait a bit. Let me pour you out a nutshell full of this curaçoa. It is fabulously good. A drop will stimulate if the heart is weak, as yours is." She filled the tiny glasses and pressed one into her sister-in-law's hand. "Drink," she urged, bravely setting the example.

Mrs. Sevenbanks, with a deep sigh, obeyed. They replaced the glasses on the table.

"That was a present to me," said Mrs. Harding. "I have a commoner kind for ordinary friends. I saved this for you to try."

"You are very kind," replied Mrs. Sevenbanks. The faintest wild rose pink was dawning in her cheeks. She seemed stronger and more capable of interest in her sister-in-law. "You brought a party of friends?" she presently inquired.

"Yes, the Gonzalez family and Mr. Vasquez. They were all very kind to me in Paris. And back in South America Vasquez was greatly attached to—Mr. Sylvester, as well as to my late husband."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Sevenbanks. "To my brother Francis? I should like to meet him—but then——"

"Do not worry. He knows about that unfortunate marriage—he will never allude to it. You see he was once—but that is seven or eight years ago—he was then the first sweetheart of our niece."

"Ester Harding! What are you saying?" And after a pause Mrs.

Sevenbanks, clasping her hands hard on her knee and bending forward, repeated, distressfully: "What are you saying?"

"I am saying the truth—no more or less. He is a fine fellow, a distinguished-looking man. You will say so when you see him."

"I saw two strange gentlemen this evening on the piazza. One was little and dark, the other tall and grave. Could they have been——?"

"The little man was Gonzalez, the tall one Vasquez."

"But they—the little man looked a Parisian, and the other——"

"Precisely. Well, my dear sister-in-law, that is the man who should have married our niece."

Mrs. Sevenbanks stared helplessly at the curaçoa bottle.

"I grieve to say he did not," went on the other lady presently. "And why? All for a childish jealousy. Someone had told the girl that he was in love with a married woman."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Sevenbanks, with a start.

"Impossible for *him*, yes. Not impossible, perhaps, for some of his countrymen, for you know they are quite as fashionably up to date as some of our dear New Yorkers."

"His face impressed me as noble," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, thoughtfully. Then she drew a long breath. "But why," she murmured, "why have you brought these people here, the sight of whom can only remind me? You cannot mean to——"

"What could I mean? No, I thought you had gone back to town. But finding to the contrary, I was rather glad to think that I could present to you a countryman who was not absolutely a savage."

"Ester! Alas that it should be too late! Do not say any more. I have blamed myself enough. I was too uninformed—too prejudiced. If I had not insisted on the Clifford proposal . . . Perhaps you have heard how he married soon after—an impossible person whom he had long known and who can never be received."

Mrs. Harding spoke abruptly: "Have you seen Alma?"

Mrs. Sevenbanks gasped. "How could I? She has not come to me."

"You think she is well—and contented?"

"Heaven only knows. I had a letter from Mrs. Dow. Alice had seen her somewhere. They had not spoken. She looked well, Alice said."

"It would be like those Dows not to speak. A foolish precaution! That pattern of breeding, that raw-boned paragon of good form, will never find an earl to marry. She has not the money her cousin had—nor the beauty." She cleared her throat of its anger. Then, "I wrote Alma from Paris," she said, "six weeks ago. I asked her to come over there, but I got no answer. I was sure she would answer. Letters pass very quickly, and I was there until a fortnight ago."

"How did you know her address?"

"Why, I used the same old address, in care of your lawyer man."

"You mean her maiden name?"

"We Latins never renounce our fathers' honored names."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, more gently. "But it is most likely she had no money."

"Oh, yes, she had," said Mrs. Harding, positively. There was silence for a time, then she inquired, "You are here alone—not even a maid?"

"I feared to bring Nora; she *would* gossip. And Jane is simply worthless away from town. I suppose she must marry James—eventually. There is a neat young chambermaid here who does all I require. It is understood, and the proprietor has no objection to my paying her. I could spare her if you should need——"

"Many thanks, but I am well used to waiting on myself. Now you must take just a tiny sip of this—" She refilled the glasses. "It revives you. I was amazed at what a scientific man told me of its properties. You have already some color in your face. If you knew how young it makes you look——"

Mrs. Sevenbanks smiled faintly. "You will have your jest, Ester." But she took the cordial. "It is late," she said, rising; "I must retire. I had such a long drive! We will talk more in the morning. Regrets are the most futile things. Still, if only I had not insisted on the Clifford proposal!" The curaçoa had made her more communicative. "And now—now there is no remedy—" She reached out and caught the hands of her sister-in-law. "There is no remedy, Ester? I suppose none?" Her eyes searched the other's countenance almost feverishly.

Mrs. Harding shook her head. "How can I tell? One thing, I am unalterably opposed to divorce," she said, with strong emphasis. "It is so much more honorable to travel—so much more in accordance with a lofty character." She followed the other to the door. "I will see you again in the morning. I have another bottle of that cordial, which I am going to give you. It will do you a world of good. Just the two bottles were presented me, and I have saved the other, knowing you were not strong. Till to-morrow; and remember—" she lowered her voice—"I am unalterably opposed to divorce. Anything else——"

"Good-night," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, floating away like a snow wraith into the dimness of the passage.

XVII

ON the night following that on which Alma's anxious aunts had sat speaking of her in that upper chamber of the seaside hotel Alma herself sat alone at her window in Madison avenue. She had been alone in the apartment for over twenty-four hours. Da Veiga, since going out with the fifty dollars in his pocket the previous afternoon, had omitted to return. She felt sure now that he had gone to the Twenty-fourth street house, and that the woman Barbara had kept him there. She had waited patiently all day for some message, never once leaving the building. She

hardly knew whether she had eaten anything or not. There were biscuits, cheese and plenty of coffee in the house, but she had not felt hungry. Probably she had eaten and drunk mechanically. It was now approaching ten o'clock, and she began to think it would be well to seek rest. She was worn out, and her thoughts seemed at times to drift uncontrollably, like *débris* on some high Spring flood. A crisis had come into her life, she knew, and she was powerless to avert it.

Lingering yet a little by the window, she could see distinctly in the white moonlight on the street below the few pedestrians that passed. At last, just as she was about to turn away, she caught sight of a familiar figure turning the corner into the avenue. It was da Veiga, finally returning.

She remained there, watching his approach. He came deliberately, at peace, it seemed, with all the world. She moved slightly back from the window as he crossed to the house entrance, but even as she did so her gaze fell on another figure turning the corner into the avenue—the figure of a woman. It was impossible for her to mistake, in that intense white light, the hesitation, the stealthy half-pause, the redetermination of the woman Barbara! She was following him home!

To what end? For what purpose? Did he suspect? Was it by some arrangement with him that she followed? Was he going out to meet her again? Did he think Alma might have gone away? Was it an understanding between them to pretend some amicable settlement and separation? Was it—money? A thousand fancies framed themselves to distract her in the few seconds of actual time.

She saw the woman linger on the opposite side, then hastily cross over in his tracks. A sudden suffocating terror came on her. To escape from them—night and all—to escape. Her hat—her purse in her bosom—to escape! The elevator was coming up

—she had but seconds. Her hat—she caught it—then she heard his key in the door. Between the drawing-room and its alcove were abundant satin portières that had been drawn back to the utmost during the hot weather. Into the folds of these she crept and stood motionless. She heard da Veiga enter, breathing wearily. “I ’ave walk fast,” he said, in English. “No one ’ere? Oh, *mi querida!*” Then, in Spanish, “She has gone, as I expected. Well—she will come back.” He retraced his way down the passage to the dining-room, where the gas burned dimly. His next act, she thought, would be to make coffee and drink it. She waited to hear the clatter of the gas range, during which she might pass out and close the door after her without being heard. But she seemed to wait in vain. He was perhaps changing his coat or continuing to seek for her. Still she waited. Suddenly she started at hearing the bell of the apartment door ring quietly, steadily. Could it be—?

She heard him coming from the remote kitchen. “So—she ’as come back,” he said. “I did know. Well, *mi queri—*” He had opened the door and stood facing—someone very different. “You!” he cried, with hysterical shrillness. “Why you did come to this ’ouse? Now, so I prove to you there is no woman—in every room I lead you. You make my to kill you yet, if so you think those things, Bébé!” The door closed heavily. The two were in the private passage. And Alma stifled in the heavy satin portières.

“Have you killed *her* yet?” the woman questioned, in a low, sarcastic tone. “No, Rufino da Veiga, the time has come when you must choose. I am tired of your promises and your falsehoods. I am tired of trusting you. The end is going to be right now, or—well, I shall make an end. You needn’t look scared; I don’t mean murder—or suicide. No, nothing of the sort. I mean to—expose you!”

There was an instant of breath-

less silence, then the sound of a low chuckle. “Oh, Bébé, what foolish woman! ’Ow you can ex-
pose? What I ’ave done? I kill no one—I do no ’arm—”

“No, Rufino, you didn’t kill the old Count. But when he died you stole his papers—stole his title—stole the few things he had about him. You may claim he gave them to you, as you were his trusted servant. But all he ever *gave* you, Rufino, was that scar on the face, where he struck you for being too fond of his housekeeper. He had a fiery temper, the old Count. You see, I know everything, Rufino. You didn’t think I knew so much? I found a letter and I paid to have it translated. That was easily done. I have the letter still, not where you can ever get it—not in Twenty-fourth street. And I have sent a copy to a man who has a friend who is from South America and is a lawyer. And this lawyer will be in New York in a few days. Then, Rufino, if you have not made an end of this business, you will be exposed. And I—I shall turn you into the street.”

Da Veiga laughed aloud. “You are one foolish woman, Bébé. You think to scare my. Poor Bébé! Who will believe one crazy woman? I will say, ‘It is because I will not give ’er money.’ The judge will say, ‘She is one blackmailer.’ Eh, Bébé?”

“The rich family of your heiress will not say so. Just one word to them and they will do all the rest. Just one word only I need to say. I tell them that the man who played the Count Geraldina, the millionaire concessionary, is an impostor. The real Count is dead. I say to them, ‘The man you know, the tall, fine-looking man, the bronzed general, the refugee, the revolutionist, was only an employé of the late Count. He was the late Count’s courier and—*valet!*’”

There was the sound of husky, hard breathing. Was the heart excitement purely her own, Alma wondered, or did she hear the labored respirations of the two strange beings in the passage?

"Vare well, Bébé," said da Veiga, presently, in a resigned way. "I see you are one *diablo*. What you will 'ave I do? I go back with you to Twenty-fourth street. I get my 'at and coat. I leave the gas turned low. I go with you."

XVIII

WHEN Alma was blocks away from the house she regretted that she had not taken a small handbag. She feared no hotel would admit her at that hour. She was well aware that night clerks suspected all unattended women of suicidal intentions. She had no idea what she was going to do for shelter. She must get away from that terrible apartment before she could think or determine. Walking aimlessly for nearly an hour, all at once she discovered herself within a square of her old home, the town house of her aunt, Mrs. Sevenbanks. She remembered there were always a couple of servants there throughout the Summer. It was nearly midnight, but owing to the sultry heat the housekeeper or the butler might be awake. They could offer no objection to her remaining for the night. At all events, she would make the attempt. The idea came like a ray of crystal clearness through the darkness of all other thoughts.

She succeeded in waking them even more easily than she had anticipated. The housekeeper came to the area door dressed and actually smiling. There was no surprise in her manner. "Oh, it is you, Miss Alma."

"Yes, it is I, Josephine. You did not expect me at this hour?"

The answer came in somewhat startling form: "The telegram was not so clear, miss; it didn't say whether to-day or to-morrow. It only said: 'Prepare rooms at once for Mrs. Harding.' We thought best to wait up till twelve."

For the briefest instant Alma stood motionless. Then: "I find it a little dim here," she said, slowly;

"the moonlight dazzles." She followed the woman in. "It was wise to wait up, Josephine," she said, recovering herself after a few seconds. "And at what time did you receive the despatch?"

"It was about noon, miss. You will find it in the dressing-room. We prepared the chamber that Mrs. Harding always occupies."

"That was right. The dressing-room with the little bed will do for me. Mrs. Harding may not arrive until morning. I will go up at once, Josephine. The lights are on in the hall, I suppose."

"The electric, yes, miss. Shall I go with you?"

"You may, please, and—get me the telegram." She said to herself if this were all a dream she would waken when she came to reach for the yellow form. But no wakening came. The telegram was dated at the Beach that very morning. "Prepare rooms at once for Mrs. Harding," it said, and the signature was "L. S. Sevenbanks," exactly as her Aunt Louise was in the habit of signing when writing or wiring to her servants.

The housekeeper lingered a little. "It is a pleasure to see you again, Miss Alma," she ventured. "Can I do anything for you? Would you desire a bath prepared?"

"Thank you, Josephine, I require nothing. I am going to bed at once. The little bed in the dressing-room—I am tired—I shall want coffee rather early—before nine, I think. I will ring for you to send it up. I suppose James is still here? Yes? Good-night, Josephine."

"Good-night, Miss Alma."

Alma was alone in her old home.

She sat down on the divan at the foot of the great carved bed in the larger room. "Aunt Ester coming here to-morrow! Aunt Ester not in Paris, but at the Beach—and her letter only two days in my hands! What can I say to her? What will she say to me?" All at once she sprang up and locked herself in, then began to undress with a sort of fren-

zied haste. She would get into bed before anything should happen to alter matters. With her reëntry into this conventional and stately home she felt herself suddenly restored to the conventional mental condition of her girlhood days—a helpless, ultra-womanly condition. Up to the moment of entering she could have walked the streets till morning, gone about fearless and uncaring. Now she felt that rather than step from the house to the pavement she would seek means of suicide. There was as much terror and horror for her at the thought of being out unprotected in the night as she would have felt in the months of early Spring, before she ever saw da Veiga. If they should ask her to leave, or coldly thrust her out, she would fall dying on the stones of the sidewalk, it seemed to her. Surely they would not molest her if they found she had retired. With these wild and foolish forebodings she cowered under the linen sheet and straightway fell into the deep oblivion of exhaustion.

She knew nothing more till roused by a loud knocking. She sat up in bed and looked round her uncomprehendingly. It was another day. She was there, it was no dream. A familiar voice was calling her name:

"Alma, open quickly! It is I—" the voice of her Aunt Ester.

"Yes," she was able to make husky answer, as she slipped from the bed and stood a moment on the Persian rug. Her glance fell on a bath robe folded neatly on a chair. She caught it up, wrapped it about her and opened the door.

Mrs. Harding reached out and embraced her lightly. "So glad, my dear! You got here first, it seems." She pushed her gently back into the room, and turning, spoke to the housekeeper in the hall. "Josephine, do me the kind favor to go down and personally superintend the making of that coffee, else it will be too weak. You always know just what I want. In ten or fifteen minutes will be soon enough. Thank you, Josephine, that is all." She closed the door behind

her. "Heaven be praised, my child," she said.

Alma had receded to the bed. Her lips moved, but her throat was constricted. Ester Harding watched her with sympathetic eyes. "There," she said, "don't look so white; all will come right. It was to find you I came. I thought it would be harder."

Alma sank on the bed. "To find me?" The words came unsteadily. "Aunt Ester, I am lost. You—you do not know. He—he is an impostor. He is no count—he was only—the Count's—valet!" She fell to shaking like one with a chill.

Ester Harding breathed deeply. Then: "Heaven again be praised!" she cried. "I find my task half-done—I do not have to break the news to *you*."

"You don't understand—you don't know, Aunt Ester——"

"I know all. It is why I am here. I came from Paris. I wrote you and you did not answer——"

"I only got your letter the day before yesterday."

"As you did not answer I had to come. And it is better so. All will soon come right."

"Aunt Ester, you have not understood me yet. He was not the Count, but——"

"That is what I had come to tell you, and I must say I did not enjoy the task in prospect. But all this is why I am down at the Beach with a party of six on my hands. Yes, my dear, I had to bring the entire blessed Gonzalez family from Paris. They are down there as my guests. It costs me something, but what of that? I had to bring Severino Gonzalez—he knew the real Count. It was he, besides, who wrote the letter of introduction for the real Count—the letter whose date was altered. Naturally, Severino could not leave his wife behind, nor could she leave her daughters unchaperoned. As for Pepito, he amuses me."

"Pepito?" murmured Alma, still shivering.

"That is young Gonzalez. Why do you tremble so, child? Dress

yourself, partly at least. After our good strong coffee you can tell me what you will. Above all, not a word for the servants to catch and repeat; I faithfully promised this to your Aunt Sevenbanks."

"My Aunt Sevenbanks," murmured Alma, desolately. "She can never forgive me."

"It is herself that she is inclined not to forgive. She considers it entirely her own fault. If you could hear her! She blames herself for having approved the old widower, what was his name? She does not like him so well now. It seems he married someone that he had known a long time. I never before knew that could prove an objection—it seems his wife will not be received on that account. Your aunt was quite shaken. How happy she will be to have you back again!"

"She did not say I had disgraced her?" the girl faltered.

"*Hija!* That is something only people of low extraction are capable of, speaking against their own flesh and blood—particularly their children. Do not insult her with such a thought. But dress yourself. I am going to telegraph for your Aunt Sevenbanks to come at once."

XIX

AFTER sending the telegram they had time to sit talking matters over. For the third time Alma asked her aunt how she had worded the message, and for the third time Ester Harding repeated, patiently: "'If possible, come up to town at once. Alma is here to remain. All well and serene.'" There were seven extra words, she clearly remembered.

A heavy shower fell in the early afternoon and made the air a little less oppressive. They remained for the most part in the chamber that had been specially opened for the Spanish lady. The drawing-rooms and other suites were of course closed. All the heavy green shades of the windows were down, and they

found it dim and restful as the rain began.

Mrs. Harding had not pressed the girl to recite her experiences, and of these Alma spoke but little beyond that part beginning with the appearance of the woman Barbara on the scene. The elder lady seemed at times desirous to avert a tragic aspect. She made her niece describe the woman. "A large, long nose, you say," she commented. "A very large nose, like Cyrano de Bergerac's or just a generous nose, 'the nose of a woman who would always have money in the bank?' Where did I hear that?" She even tried to smile over incidents. "Let us keep as cheerful as we can, my dear," she said. "It may seem dark for a while, but we shall get over it." Now and then she would try to divert with irrelevant remarks: "Strange these New York houses cannot be kept cooler. One does not suffer so indoors in the tropics. If all the draperies could be sent away—that rug in the dressing-room smells hot."

"The Bokhara prayer-rug," said Alma, feebly. "Aunt Louise thought it a bargain at two hundred and fifty dollars."

"A cold weather bargain. The rain seems to cease. I hope it will be cooler by seven if she comes on the four o'clock train."

Alma moved uneasily in her chair. She seemed nerving herself for something. After a great effort she managed to ask: "Aunt Ester, how much does Aunt Louise know?"

"By this time, probably more than we do. It makes no difference. The main thing is that you are here, safe."

"She will never let me stay here."

"That is nonsense, my dear. In the first place, she knows she was to blame—has acknowledged it to me. Why did she not cable me? No, she waited and wrote. Poor soul, she regrets waiting now. I was in Paris; the Gonzalez family was there. I knew nothing of what you had done when, one day, as was natural, I asked Severino something about the letter he had sent by the Count. He

had forgotten about it. 'Strange,' I said, 'very strange.'

"One forgets a good deal in a year," he apologized.

"How in a year?"

"Why, the Count is dead more than a year."

"The Count is dead?" I repeated. 'Did I not leave him in New York, very much alive—very stout and healthy?'

"Of whom are you talking?" he asked, bewildered.

"Of Geraldina, of course."

"I tell you he is dead—over a year."

"You did not recently send him to me with a letter of introduction?"

"Why, I did give him a letter some weeks before he died."

"Well, he has, then, come to life again. He is over in New York."

"You mistake. What sort of a man is this you speak of, *señora*?"

"A tall, large man—part Indian. If he were not so tanned he would be called fine looking."

"Geraldina was little and crippled from a bullet in the thigh," he said.

"Who, then, presented to me your letter? Who is this man?" I asked.

"Severino reflected. 'It may have been that someone stole the letter after the death of Geraldina.'

"But who would have access to his effects?"

"Some friend or dependent, perhaps."

"Pepito, Severino's son, who sat listening as we talked, spoke up. 'You would like to see a picture of the Count, *señora*? I took one a few weeks before he died, with my large camera. It is in my collection. I will get it.' He was gone not five minutes and came back with his hands full of prints. 'Here,' he said, 'is one of the Count, alone.' I looked and saw a thin-faced, shrunken cripple leaning on a cane. 'And here—' he began to laugh—'here is a snapshot of the Count when his valet was carrying him aboard the yacht of Mr. Brown, the rich American. And they were together so heavy that the din-

gey capsized and they fell in the water. Oh, the valet was strong, but—'

"I looked and saw two figures, one carrying the other. 'Who is the large man?' I inquired.

"Why, the valet," said Pepito.

"It was he," I said to Severino, 'who brought me the letter of introduction and was presented by me to my sister-in-law, Mrs. Sevenbanks.'

"Severino was silent for some seconds. Then he said, shrugging a little: '*Señora*, I am sincerely sorry, but—no Yankee woman is ever long imposed on.'

"Soon after, we received the news of what you had done."

Alma uttered a groan. "What will become of me? She will never forgive me," she reiterated.

"She has already forgiven you," said Ester Harding, "and—if you don't go on living here, you might travel. It seems to me, in such a case, it is good taste to travel—awhile."

"I am too poor to travel," said Alma, "and too—unhappy." She continued, after an instant, unsteadily: "Besides, there must be some kind of separation."

"That we shall come to later on. Nothing in too much haste. We shall have good legal advice to adjust your status."

"I wish," said the girl, suddenly, "I could go far away from New York forever—and forget it all."

"We shall see."

"Aunt Louise did not say what she thought should be done?"

"I gave her no time to consider. I started out by saying, 'I am unalterably opposed to divorce.'"

"But, Aunt Ester, you wouldn't leave me tied to that man—an impostor—another woman's husband in the sight of heaven—a valet—?"

"My dear, I had to take a stand. We are going to see about it. You must remember several things. First, the 'sight of heaven,' with all due reverence, plays no great part in matrimony. If it did, gracious hosts, what an upsettal of things! It is the

sight of the *law* that counts. Then, the strict, religious principles of your Aunt Sevenbanks, a devout church woman. No toleration of divorce. The good bishops and clergy——"

"The bishops and clergy don't have to live with valets," cried Alma, wildly.

"H'sh! I know. Between you and me, they might cultivate a few more scruples about marrying unsuitable couples. But one must take a very moral stand and at the same time endeavor to be diplomatic. Without diplomacy the world would again become chaotic. I remember while we were crossing from Havre to New York I was lying flat on my back in the berth, not sick at all, but wishing to spare myself the grief of seeing the excellent Gonzalez folk suffer. A little rhyme came running through my head that seemed to point a moral and a course. I don't recall the Spanish words, but this is the way it would go in English:

"See a little pig sunning in the yard;
Would you have it come to you, hit it
good and hard.
Would you have it run away, this is of
avail:
Plant your feet and drag it backward by
its curly tail."

She paused, but Alma, with her face bowed in her hands, only breathed heavily.

A slight commotion was audible in the hall or on the landing below. Mrs. Harding went out and spoke over the baluster:

"Josephine, you have received a telegram?"

"Yes, madam. Mrs. Sevenbanks will arrive this evening. We are preparing her apartment."

XX

At the sound of cab wheels grinding up close to the curbstone—Mrs. Sevenbanks had really chosen a cheap little cab to drive her from the ferry—a wave of nervous terror seemed to inundate the entire chamber. Alma sat drowned and speechless; Ester Hard-

ing flew to the window, tried to peep out and returned quickly to her chair. One of her small Spanish feet tapped the floor as ceaselessly as if connected with an electric battery. Once she turned her head slightly to see that the maid had not taken away her second bottle of sacred curaçoa, which she had promised to Mrs. Sevenbanks and meant presently to bring to good use if necessary.

"I wish I didn't shake so," said Alma.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Ester Harding; "what in the world is there to shake about?" and she moved forward in her chair and made a desperate effort to keep her foot still. The door leading to the wide landing was open. They could hear Mrs. Sevenbanks speaking mildly to the housekeeper: "All are well, I trust. You have ordered dinner for eight o'clock, as usual? You may take the things out of the bag. No, do not send Jane. I shall not dress for dinner. I am going up to Mrs. Harding."

Ester Harding rose as her sister-in-law entered. It seemed to her Mrs. Sevenbanks was looking unusually young. The heat of the day had flushed the lady's cheeks. She wore a tailored costume of finest green-gray cloth, as thin of texture as the silken peachblow lining. Her small hat was a marvel of good taste and her fair hair shone pale golden.

"Can it be she 'regenerates' it?" Ester asked herself. "She keeps herself slender. The secret of youth is never to get fat under the chin." And even while thus reflecting she was giving the lady a slight handshake and smile. "You must be tired. Do sit down here. As you see, our truant has come home. I am sure we shall all soon be happy again."

Alma, on the other hand, had not been able to rise to greet her aunt. She sat steeped in wretchedness and her head dropped on her breast.

Mrs. Sevenbanks sighed softly but distinctly and sat down. "I am a little tired," she said. "You are looking thin, Alma."

Alma lifted her head. She found she could speak and must speak. She began with some directness: "Aunt Louise, I know that I acted badly toward you, and I am sincerely sorry. I hope you will pardon me. I have been punished enough, and my only desire now is to leave New York—go away where I shall not be any further trouble to you. I know you will always be reminded of my rashness and the mistake I made. Still, if I had married Mr. Clifford I should have made one just as bad, or worse. For even before he spoke to you about proposing to me I knew things about his way of life. I never dared to speak to you about it, for you would have thought it shocking for a young girl to know such things, and you would have been vexed. It was Alice Dow who first told me, and everyone considered her so sensible. She told me how Mr. Clifford knew this same woman that he has finally married even before his first marriage, and how he went back to her after each marriage, not always waiting for his wife to die, either—went back to her, as he said, for 'comfort in disillusionment.' And how each time she took him back as patiently as she had given him up previously. And besides, how there was a child. Yes, I knew all this from Alice Dow, and how could I think of marrying such a man?" She paused, breathing fast after this flow of words.

"I knew nothing of these stories," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, with a slight chill of tone. "I am greatly astonished at Miss Dow." It was the first time she had ever called Alice "Miss Dow."

Ester Harding now thought it her turn to speak. "Well," she said, cheerily, "all's well that is going to end well. I have been saying to Alma that should you approve she might travel for a time."

Mrs. Sevenbanks cleared her throat. "Yes," she agreed, slowly, "I have decided upon this plan. Arrangements will be begun at once for a trip. I must explain to you that not long after you had left the Beach this

morning the mail was brought up and Señor Roberto found a communication that brought him quickly to speak with me. Documents had been forwarded to him bearing on this very case, including letters that will have due effect. In the course of our serious and careful conversation he gave me his opinion that Alma should speedily seek legal separation. We then decided that the best course would be to start at once for Dakota, establish a residence there and engage the best counsel."

Ester Harding looked a little astonished. "From whom could he have received the documents?" she asked, doubtfully.

"From an American friend who is also a lawyer in this city, and who in sending them was acting in the interest of a person—a woman who makes some claim," Mrs. Sevenbanks concluded, rather haughtily.

"Bébé," Alma murmured, faintly. She was wondering who this Señor Roberto might be. One of her Aunt Ester's South American friends, no doubt. The die was cast, it seemed. She was to go to Dakota.

After a moment Mrs. Sevenbanks continued: "It will be necessary, of course, for one or both of us to accompany Alma. The preparations can be made in a few days. I do not think I shall return to the Beach, though perhaps it may be necessary for you to do so in order to look after your friends." She smiled faintly. "The young ladies appear devoted to golf, but as near as I can understand, object to their mamma acting as caddy."

"They may all have to go to Dakota as witnesses," said Mrs. Harding, taking a cobweb handkerchief from her sleeve and fanning herself with it in a desperate way. "It is getting colossal."

"I hardly think it will be necessary. Depositions can be taken. We must endeavor to eliminate all unnecessary features, if you will permit me to say so, my dear Ester."

The Spanish lady reflected in silence. "Why didn't he come up to

town with you?" she exclaimed, after a moment.

"To whom do you refer? Señor Roberto? I was about to tell you that he did come up with me. He has gone to his hotel."

"Good! I will send for him to come here after dinner."

"It is some friend of yours, Aunt Ester, this Señor Roberto?" Alma inquired, rousing a little.

"My dear, why of course. I have not had time to mention it. An old friend of ours, whom your dear father knew."

Mrs. Sevenbanks glanced at her sister-in-law in surprise. "Had you not told her?" she asked, speaking with far more mildness than before; "had you not told her of our reliance on Don Vasquez?"

XXI

NATURALLY Ester Harding did not carry out her plan of sending for Señor Vasquez after dinner. For one reason, Alma's sudden fainting spell—due entirely, as both elder ladies agreed, to the intense heat—had alarmed them, although on recovering she had insisted on going down to dine with them and had actually taken a few spoonfuls of bouillon. The drawing-rooms, dismantled and swathed in Summer linens, afforded them no place of repose, and they were obliged to return after dinner to the upper stories. Alma continued on up, saying she wished to lie down and rest, while her aunts paused to converse in Mrs. Sevenbanks's boudoir.

Mrs. Sevenbanks sighed as she took a seat near the window. "It seems strange to be here at this time," she said. "I have often regretted that I ever let my country house. It was a serious mistake. Yet at the time it seemed foolish to maintain that expensive establishment for one weary old woman like myself and a girl of as simple and democratic tastes as Alma. It seemed especially foolish when those Western people were so anxious to take it at any price." She sighed

again. "I might have asked them double the sum. Living is so costly nowadays. Enormous taxes devour one. I would not be sorry to sell this house. There were conditions in the will, but they might be met. I should try to find a modest little home somewhere out on the Riverside Drive."

"You would have to build it," said Ester, practically. "There is nothing there but palaces and apartment hotels. Taxes you would never survive. I wonder what we should do if these single tax lunatics ever got control. In some tropical countries there is no land tax. It is paradise. The poorest peasant tills his own ground and doesn't ask you for alms. Ask Señor Vasquez."

Mrs. Sevenbanks coughed slightly. "Do you think—" she lowered her voice—"it was the mention of his name—you know—"

"That shocked her into fainting? I hope not. Still, you see the 'Don' doesn't go with the surname."

"I dare say I make painful blunders," Mrs. Sevenbanks acquiesced, with meek sarcasm.

"Not at all. But about this trip to Dakota? I wish it were over and the matter settled."

"I thought," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, with sudden recollection, "that you were unalterably opposed to divorce."

"So I am! so I am!" cried Ester, quickly. "Theoretically at least. But if it comes to one's own flesh and blood being linked to a horrid impostor—a valet! Don Roberto broke it to you gently, I know. A valet! it is more than human nature can endure." She rose. "I think," she said, "I ought to go up and persuade Alma to retire. There is always danger of a low fever following on such mental strain. To-morrow we must consult Vasquez, and whenever you wish I am ready to follow implicitly your instructions and accompany you with the poor girl to the West. Rely on me, Louise, I beg of you. No matter how painful the duty, rely on me to fulfil it."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Seven-

banks, calmly. "Then if you are going up to Alma will you kindly ring for Jane for me? The bell is by the door. Thank you again, dear Ester. Good-night, since you must go."

Alma was already in bed, with the cool linen sheet drawn close to her chin. "I am not asleep," she said, as Ester sat down beside her, and after a moment's pause, "Don't let me have to see Vasquez! I couldn't bear it."

"No, of course not. It isn't necessary at all; it is really surprising what a fancy your Aunt Louise has taken to him. I always think what a pity it is that things always happen too late. Well, of course he can be of great use to us—as a friend, nothing more. We must let him be a friend; it is only a fair apology on our part for your ever having misjudged him as you did, thinking him in love with that woman, when it was really Prudencio—surely you remember Don Prudencio, his great friend, with the invalid wife? The wife died; so did the superfluous husband; then Prudencio married the lady."

"Don Prudencio," Alma repeated, huskily. "Was it really he—not Vasquez? Well—it can't matter now. He would never look at me. I shall be only an unfortunate divorced woman, who married a valet."

Mrs. Harding got up and closed the door softly. "My dear, there are worse things. This is a republic, remember, where all men are equal. A valet might be as good as anyone else, and his wife a good deal better. Anyway," she continued, rather inconsistently, "once you are out of it you will be surprised how quickly people forget. Especially if you should marry again. But there is no need for worry. I have an idea we shall start to-morrow or the next day for the West. I hope so, for it must be cooler out there. To-morrow I have to devise a way to get your clothes from that apartment."

"Oh, yes, my clothes," said Alma. "I suppose I shall need them."

"Well, one can't do very well without garments. I see your arms are bare. Didn't Josephine lay out a nightgown for you? I must ring. Surely in a civilized house one can always command a *robe de nuit*."

XXII

Mrs. HARDING was the first to alight from the closed carriage as it drew up before the station. The town was still enwrapped in sultriness, but Ester was not one to complain of mere atmosphere when more important matters were pressing. They had been busy for the past forty-eight hours. Fortunately there had been less difficulty than she had anticipated in getting Alma's things from the Madison avenue apartment. When the confidential messenger despatched thither to reconnoiter came back with word of the dispossession notice tacked on the door Ester had promptly summoned an expressman and given him orders; then possessed herself of Alma's key and proceeded in person to the spot to pack up whatever she should recognize as her niece's. "The fox is the best messenger," she quoted aloud. She felt now a complacent delight in the belief that she had left no souvenir for the redoubtable da Veiga to exult over. She had been forced to admit to herself that the rascal had excellent taste in furniture and decorations. She had particularly admired the piano stool—a giant iron mushroom with smaller mushrooms at the base, all in the richest mushroom-hued velvet. She had felt a new sympathy for her niece after getting the trunks packed and carted away. What superb audacity, that of the bogus Geraldina!

After Mrs. Harding came Mrs. Sevenbanks, pale and preoccupied, then the girl herself. All were in quiet traveling attire and seemed anxious to escape attention. Mrs. Harding hastily sent the carriage away and followed the others into the waiting-room.

"I see nothing of Jane," said Mrs. Sevenbanks, irritably, as she gazed about.

"Jane is probably weeping goodbye on the butler's shoulder," Mrs. Harding answered.

"But she had orders to be here with the bags and umbrellas long ahead of us."

"I will leave you and Alma and go through the other rooms. She may be in the New Haven division." And Mrs. Harding disappeared. She returned in a few moments unsuccessful. "I see Vasquez outside, however, getting out of a hansom," she remarked.

Mrs. Sevenbanks sighed faintly. "Ah! he promised to see us off." At this Alma sank down limp and quiet between the iron arm supports of the waiting-room bench, while Mrs. Harding hastened over to the door and met the gentleman coming in. Mrs. Sevenbanks waited patiently, not even putting up her glass, but the girl's keen eyes could see distinctly the face and figure of this friend of days gone by. He had not changed at all; men stay the same, year after year, while women grow old and hideous betimes, she thought. She felt very old and drawn at this moment. She hoped her Aunt Ester would keep him down there at the door. He had the same grave expression of perfect features, the same way of lifting his hat, the same walk. He was coming toward them just as he had come toward her that last evening—what an age of years ago!—in the tropical sunset, down the long lane that led to the *potrero*. It was at the end of the dry season—the grass was brittle as hay on the *potrero* slopes; so dry and slippery that one could have coasted down hill on a wooden-runnerd sled to the crystal brooklet at the base. The scent of orange and lemon trees was heavy. He came in at the gate from the road. It was her father's suburban villa on the hill above the town. She had a white rose in her hair—one of the thousand roses that bloomed perpetually on the great climbing rose tree

over the adobe wall before the house.

The voice of her Aunt Sevenbanks recalled her. She came back with a pang to the present. "What can they be discussing?" the elder lady inquired, impatiently, at last, and started toward them.

"There is a mistake," said Mrs. Harding; "Don Roberto tells me we were misinformed, and we have nearly an hour to wait for our train."

Mrs. Sevenbanks was annoyed. Insufficient time to return home and over-sufficient for remaining in such a place, she commented. Mrs. Harding coincided, but there was no help for it. She undertook to explain to Vasquez how there was a new waiting-room being built that should be magnificent in white and gold. "Which is no great comfort at the present moment," Mrs. Sevenbanks put in, drily.

While speaking they were all unconsciously moving toward Alma. "That accounts, then, for Jane's tardiness," said Mrs. Harding. "The butler knew the time-table better than we." Mrs. Sevenbanks now betought herself that she would like to find a long-distance telephone and give some instructions to the hotel man at the Beach about her luggage left there. Vasquez wished to be permitted to accompany her to the booth, but she begged him to do her the greater favor of remaining with the others. She would feel more at ease. There was some apprehension in her mind, she hardly could explain what caused it. She wished they were aboard. She floated gently toward the door and vanished. Vasquez stood gazing at Mrs. Harding; both seemed embarrassed. Could he remain there without saluting the third lady of the party? Suddenly Ester gave a little cry: "Oh, Louise has forgotten! I must run after her. Please stay here, Don Roberto. I will come right back." And she, too, was gone. Vasquez took a step forward. There was no other way. Alma, seeing this, rose and put out her hand. She was able to speak composedly. "I have not yet been

able to thank you—for all your kindness. My aunt has told me—of your thoughtfulness—” Her voice failed.

“I know that you have been ill,” he answered, hastily. “It is better to sit down again, isn’t it? The heat—”

“I think I should rather walk,” she replied. “I shall have to sit so much on the long journey.”

“It is a long journey,” he acquiesced, gravely. They passed down the room. “The last time I saw you,” he said, presently—“it must be nearly seven years ago. The evening before you left the villa to return to town, I think.”

“Yes. I was recalling it a moment ago, sitting there,” said Alma, dully. “I remember it all. We walked in the lane. No doubt you have long since forgotten. . . . I said things . . . I was under a wrong impression. I misjudged you. You didn’t know the reason—you only thought me ill-natured and jealous. I did you a great wrong, it seems. I can only ask you to pardon me now . . . now when I am in trouble—and disgraced—” Her voice broke at last.

“Don’t grieve,” he said, gently; “don’t grieve. I, too—you cannot believe I had forgotten anything. That last walk—the rose in your hair—the swift sunset and the soft dusk before the stars. . . . When you left me in anger the rose fell out of your hair—I have it yet. Some men—remember.” They had reached the end of the waiting-room and had to turn abruptly.

“I see my Aunt Ester coming back. She has found Jane, it seems. Let us go to them.”

Thus the reconciliation.

Mrs. Harding had much to say to the maid, whose eyes were quite red. “But yes, Jane. The idea of crying! Of course, it shows your good heart not to want to leave your old grandmother, but think of the nice journey and all the sights. To-morrow we shall be in Chicago, where there are lakes and things. You can mail all the letters you will have written on

the train—to Josephine and Nora and—your grandmother. Then it’s only three months, and when you come back—handsome Christmas presents.”

Never had Ester Harding been so loquacious with a servant. But Alma and Vasquez stood close to her in silence. Their duet was over. Had they been alone they could not have spoken. There was something between them like a great blur that obscured all things and deadened the soul—something that must be obliterated, wiped away forever.

The moments wore on toward train time. The gateman opened the door and took his place. The guards began to call out the through express for the West. “We could go aboard if only Louise would come,” said Mrs. Harding. “She has all the tickets.” The three moved uneasily. Time was passing. “Here she comes,” cried Ester, suddenly. Mrs. Sevenbanks came hurrying along. Her face was pale with terror.

“He is out there,” she gasped to her sister-in-law. “Da Veiga—following us!” All heard her words.

“Quick—the tickets, please!” cried Vasquez, sharply. “Follow me—we must get aboard!”

XXIII

How he succeeded Vasquez afterward never quite remembered. A generous fee enlisted the services of the colored porter, and the three ladies and the maid were speedily concealed in the curtains of their adjoining sections. Vasquez breathed freer when they were out of sight. Their frightened faces had been painful. He conversed with them in low tones for a time, then bade them good-bye. Ester recalled him for an instant; would he not look carefully about the station to see . . .

He started again. But in the vestibule he found his passage blocked by a large figure. He had studied Pepito Gonzalez’s blue prints too well to be mistaken. This was really the bogus Count pursuing them. How had he passed the gates?

The two men stood gazing at each other. Then slowly and quietly Vasquez receded. He backed through the passage into the car aisle. Could he warn them? Da Veiga spared him the trouble.

"You did bring with you in this car my wife?" His accusation was so aggressively audible that other passengers arriving or already ensconced turned quickly or thrust out curious heads.

But Vasquez regarded him with unmoved features. "You were speaking to me, sir?" he inquired, indifferently.

"I say you did bring 'ere my wife!" da Veiga insisted, more loudly.

"You mistake, sir. Do me the favor to pass on."

There was silence in the car; everyone was listening. As the porter came hurrying through with a belated traveler's bag and a "'Scuse me, sah, jes' wanten set this down," da Veiga appealed furiously to him. "This man 'e 'ave rob my wife!" he shouted.

Vasquez, with his back to the curtains behind which Mrs. Harding and Alma, Mrs. Sevenbanks and her maid seemed all to have crept into their berths, made tranquil complaint. "Porter, this person has made a mistake and is annoying my family. Can you, perhaps, find the lady he wants in the other sleeper?"

"We's a-startin' now, sah. Anybody bes' git off if they isn't goin' along, sah. No stop till Sing Sing. Bes' hurry, sah," he admonished the excited newcomer.

The train was moving. They were off. The porter hurried out. As the speed of the train increased the two men rocked a little where they stood. Vasquez did not mind being carried off. He knew he could explain and pay fare to—where did the porter say?—Sing Sing, or further. He wondered if he would better go all the way to Chicago. There were reasons why he would rather not go; other reasons, perhaps stronger, why he should. The possibility of idle gossip in after days should not outweigh the necessity of protecting these

frightened women. He was sure he heard the maid whimpering, though the others hardly breathed.

The train rumbled on, more dully, through a tunnel. After a little an official of some sort came through—the conductor, Vasquez imagined. This employé he addressed in a tone of reasonable remonstrance. "This man has made a mistake and persists in annoying my family. One of the ladies has been ill; they have all retired."

"Not is so!" cried da Veiga, hoarsely. "I did see 'er aunt, then I did buy one ticket——"

The conductor lifted his lantern. "Um-m, let me see the ticket. Yours, too, if you please, sir." He modified his tone somewhat in addressing the gentleman with the family. A slender hand came out from behind the curtains with the necessary slips. It was Ester Harding's hand with its "duchess" ring of opals and diamonds. The official returned the check to da Veiga. "This is all right to Sing Sing—in another car, not this." He eyed the peculiar-looking traveler shrewdly. "Foreigner, I presume. Well, you pass along ahead and I will look into this matter for you." He turned to Vasquez. "Lady sick? Four, two sections—" He hesitated. But Vasquez was prepared. He had produced a twenty-dollar bill. "I was not going myself," he explained, quietly. "I saw my family aboard and wished to get off. You might with this bill arrange for me. At the first stop I can alight."

"If so 'e did not bring my wife," cried da Veiga, "why she will not put out 'er 'ead till I see? One 'and I see, all diamonds."

The official regarded the bill. "Guess you'd better humor him," he suggested, under his breath. "Seems a little cracked."

Vasquez looked annoyed. "Since you request it." He turned and spoke through the drapery: "Jane, just look out here for a moment."

The curtains parted. A sandy head and a pair of reddened eyelids came

into view from the upper berth. The official looked at da Veiga. "Well, is that your wife?" he asked, sharply.

"No!" came the answer, in a roar of rage.

"Pass right along, then, please. Can't have the passengers disturbed."

"She is there!" da Veiga wailingly insisted.

Vasquez shrugged his shoulders. "How much longer must this go on? We paid for *sleeping* accommodations."

"Certainly, sir. Um-m—lady in lower berth wife's mother?"

"Who else should she be?" He hoped Mrs. Sevenbanks would forgive him. "In the morning," he added, "he can discover for himself."

"That is fair enough," said the official.

Da Veiga suddenly collapsed into meekness. "Vare well, Mr. Conductor. I go with you in that other car." His broad shoulders moved along the aisle. Vasquez drew a long breath. Suddenly he noticed great drops of perspiration on his face and hands. Was it such a warm night, then?

"Don Roberto!" he heard Ester Harding calling him.

"Yes, *señora*," he answered, in Spanish. "He has gone."

"But he will return."

"I hope not. If so, I will meet him at the door. At Sing Sing he must get off—before I do."

"At what time will that be?"

"In about an hour—or two, I suppose."

"*Ave Maria!* Who could have foreseen this? Jane put her head out?"

"Very nobly. We must remember Jane."

"Her *mother*, too, eh?"

"For heaven's sake, *señora!* It was unavoidable."

"Was everyone listening?"

"Not so particularly. It is true he yelled. You are all comfortable, *señora*, I trust, and I will go out to the other car and see where he is. He agreed to wait till morning, but his ticket is only to Sing Sing."

"Good heavens! Then go quickly, Don Roberto. Heaven protect you!"

XXIV

"You are asleep, Alma?"

"No."

"It is very hot up there?"

"I don't mind; but I am thirsty. Will you let me take your wrap to go for a drink?"

"Of course—here. . . . Can you get down? Don't fall. Wait; hadn't you better let me fetch the water?"

"I can go very well." She drew on the gauze-like traveling cloak. Her bare arms looked thin and pallid in the flowing sleeves. "I am all right now," she said; "I had not taken off my shoes, even."

"Hurry back."

"Oh, there's nothing to be afraid of—now." She balanced herself carefully along between the section hangings. On she went, to the end of the car. There Vasquez met and stopped her.

"Go back quickly!" he said; but too late. Da Veiga was confronting them.

"Liars of the devil!" was his greeting, in Spanish. "Liars of the infernal! You try to ruin a poor foreigner!" Suddenly he changed to English. "I will find that conductor and I will prove to 'im. Then I will make you to be sorry for this trick."

"Silence!" said Vasquez, in his own language. "You will leave this car; you have no right here. The porter will fling you out. And you will hold your tongue and leave this train at Sing Sing, and after that go back to New York. If you do all this, it may be this lady's family will have pity and not send you to prison for bigamy. You hear?"

Da Veiga only laughed. He seemed to feel master of the situation. "If I have one wife there is no bigamy," he said, returning to Spanish. "I have one at first, perhaps, and while she is yet living I marry another. Then the first one dies and I marry still another—they are all *diablos*. But

this last I can do because the second was not my wife by the law. These laws of this country are truly good and wise!"

"Enough of that! I say you must get out of here!"

"And I say I defy you! I make one scandal and I take back my wife that stands beside you. I take 'er back, and if she say one word I take the throat in my two 'ands so, and I choke—you 'ear, I choke——"

Alma gave a gasping cry and reached out and clung to Vasquez. "Roberto, save me!" she exclaimed. He hung to him in terror. He could feel her naked arms, cold and smooth as ivory, where the wide sleeves slipped back. "Save me!" she repeated.

He supported her for an instant, then, "Go back to your aunt," he said; "leave me to settle with him. I beg you to go back!"

Their eyes met. Each seemed passionately to implore the other.

"I will," she murmured, and obeyed.

"You will return to the other car," said Vasquez, slowly. "I will go with you and you will listen to what I have to say. On behalf of this lady and her family I will make a proposition to you, and you will agree to accept it—if you are wise. They may even allow you a sum of money. At any rate, you will escape the courts and prison. Now lead the way without a moment's waste of time. We shall be in Sing Sing in five minutes, and you get off there."

They were now out on the platform, where the day coach joined the sleeper.

"You think I am a fool," said da Veiga, returning to Spanish. "For money? I need only to go in there and drag that old woman with the blond wig from her berth. That old Mrs. Sevenbanks—she will give money, diamonds—all she has—if I will be quiet and make no scandal. I can get money. It is my *wife* I want. I will have my wife!"

"Your wife is in New York."

"*Mentira!*"

"Your wife is in New York. Go back to her and show sense. She likes you; go back and beg her pardon. And—*hold your tongue!*"

"For one million dollars I will not hold my tongue!"

"Then jail for years!"

"I have no fear. You—you are her lover, but she is my wife."

"I give you thirty seconds to get back to your seat——"

Da Veiga sprang upon him. Vasquez, though tall, was slight, but he was alert and wiry. They grappled, struggled. Da Veiga had the advantage.

Vasquez felt himself choking, strangling. Then by some chance movement he gained hold of the other's arm—a peculiar hold. Afterward, reading of Jit Jitsu methods, he wondered if he had saved himself unconsciously by one of them. Da Veiga uttered a peculiar cry and fell. He fell backward, seemed not to stop falling until down the steps . . . and the train went on in the darkness.

Vasquez, supporting himself weakly by the car door, heard someone inquiring, "What's the matter?" It was the conductor with the lantern.

He had not breath to reply at once. "That fellow—attacked me."

"Who, that foreign fellow?"

"Yes."

"Where is he gone now?"

Vasquez looked toward the outer darkness. "I don't know," he answered, slowly, with a shudder.

XXV

On a crisp Midwinter night two ladies well wrapped in furs descended from an automobile before the new waiting-room of the great station. Ester Harding was seeing off an English cousin by marriage, a Harding of agreeable manners, who was going to join a house party in New England. Ester was very cheerful. "They got it finished at last," she said, "and it's a work of art. I mean this station. Too well I remember a certain hot

night last Summer when it wasn't finished and we had to wait in a place around the corner, a Noah's Ark sort of place." She turned to the driver. "You are to remain for me, you know."

"But this is quite a charming arrangement," said the English lady as they entered the great hall. "It seems all marble and electricity."

Ester was looking about for seats. "So it is," she answered, carelessly. "And what a crowd! Trains for everywhere leaving all the time. You have ten minutes yet. By-the-by, you were saying the Dows would be in your party. I hope you will like them."

"Which means *you* don't."

"I don't know them—no, that's wrong—I mean they don't know me."

"But they are friends of Mrs. Sevenbanks?"

"That is true. They will no doubt have much to ask you about Louise. Do not fail to tell them how enthusiastically she set sail for South America. They will not believe it, of course, but tell them just the same. I dare say I shouldn't have believed it myself. But she *was* in good spirits."

"You think she foresees a happy ending of—the romance?"

Ester shrugged lightly. "It was rather a matter of duty. Proper-minded people are always happiest when performing their duty, you

know. Alma was far from well, and it was Louise's duty to take her to a warmer climate. You couldn't expect the girl to be strong after a shock of that kind. . . . Vasquez broke it very gently, of course. Imagine! he kept the secret and allowed us to continue on all the way to Chicago. You see, when it happened the train was rapidly approaching a town, and aid was sent back at once."

"How dreadful! And the man was dead?"

"Absolutely. It *was* dreadful, . . . but somehow, you know, I didn't feel so terribly sorry. What impressed me was the way he handled the matter—I mean Vasquez. No scandal in the papers—positively miraculous, that. As the train came to a stop in the station he hurriedly bade us good-bye and assured us that da Veiga had already got off—*quietly*. Imagine! *Got off quietly!* We went on to Chicago and there found a telegram breaking the news to us."

"Fancy!" said the Englishwoman; "keeping it out of the papers *was* clever. Isn't it time for me to go aboard?"

"I fear it is, my dear."

"Then *au revoir*, Ester. By-the-by, did this heroic Vasquez sail with Mrs. Sevenbanks and Alma?"

"Cousin Marian! you surprise me. Certainly not. He is perfectly good form. He waited for the following steamer."



AFFECTING MEMORIES

MILLIE—Why did the widow sell her parrot?

WILLIE—She said it reminded her of her late husband.



SURELY AN EXCEPTION

HE—Someone says he never knew a rogue who was not unhappy.

SHE—How about Cupid?

PIERROT'S HOUSE

By Bliss Carman

I

A STREET that's neither grand nor poor;
A number quite unknown to fame;
Stairs; then a door without a name;
Then lodgings where content is sure;

An air of luring quietude;
A littered table; notes, and scraps
Of writing—poetry perhaps;
Mirror and window panes smoke-blued;

Pictures; a shelf of books; a tray
Of glasses, and a plate or two;
Some silver old; some journals new;
Roses; a dancing girl in clay;

A shrine; a béret; one sabot;
Wine; cigarettes; a mask; a fan;
A Persian rug; a deep divan;
Repose and joy. Here lives Pierrot.

II

All day I keep my vigil here,
My day-dream, until dusk draws down,
And out of the great noise of town
Expected eager steps draw near.

And then the shadow I pursue
Grows substance; beauty, voice and touch,
I have so longed for, loved so much,
Dawn on me, and the dream comes true.

III

Come in, come in, sweetheart of mine,
And let the crazy world go by
With blare and dust and pageantry!
For here are books and love and wine.

The good God here has made a place
Where it is good for us to be,
And given it to you and me.
Lift up that merry little face!

THE SMART SET

IV

Go by, go by, you slaving throngs,
 With heavy footsteps and sad eyes,
 And never guess what paradise
 To one improvident belongs!

For we have eaten of the fruit
 Of knowledge, and know good from ill;
 And we have chosen love; while still
 The joyless argue and dispute.

Tut, tut! What is this idle prate
 Of "duty" and of "circumstance,"
 Of "if" and "but," and "means" and "chance?"
 But love, and love will make you great.

V

There is a corner of the room
 Where all his mistress' garments be,
 Hung up in order daintily,
 Breathing faint odors through the gloom.

Ah, friends, for you your gardens wide,
 Where you may walk the world away
 In a long, meditative day,
 With phlox and rose on either side.

He chooses the seclusion dim
 Of four walls and a door that locks,
 Where fairer things than rose or phlox
 Bloom in the scented dusk for him.

VI

When old romance and moonlight lie
 On every city square and tree,
 The moonflower, Pierrette, is she;
 Her lover moon, Pierrot, am I.

Children of beauty and of night,
 We lie awake and babble tales
 Of love, until the moonshine fails
 And slumber seals our happy plight.

VII

Here lives the innocent Pierrot;
 Freedom and beauty all he asks.
 For love will guide his joyous tasks,
 And truth is all that he would know.

THE PRICE OF ADMISSION

By Felicia Goddard

MRS. SIMPSON EXETER'S victoria stopped with a clatter under the *porte-cochère*. It was August, one of those rare afternoons when Newport allows itself to be not only clear but brilliant. There never was such blue of sea, such green of lawn, such pink hydrangeas. Even the red carpet on the marble steps seemed to have taken on a brighter hue than usual.

Mrs. Exeter was a very fine lady, almost a great person; so much so that never in the course of her life had she been forced to assert the fact. This was the more remarkable inasmuch as she was not a clever woman, nor was her husband a man of large fortune, as fortunes are considered by the people among whom Mrs. Exeter lived. She was, it is true, a marvelously pretty woman, looking scarcely thirty, though, as a matter of fact, she was more than ten years older, as the age of her son attested.

It was not her beauty, however, nor even her charm of manner, that had attained for her house the reputation of being the only one to which an *entrée* meant the achievement of all things socially. Mrs. Exeter, someone had said, could get anyone into society because she would never try. Here, perhaps, lay the clue to her power—in her polite aloofness from all struggle, her fine appreciation of availability and unavailability and her instinct for social fitness, as unerring as the willow wand's for water.

She had never been in the habit of calling on her husband's business friends, although on more than one

occasion it would have been to her advantage to do so. She had observed with some shrewdness that nothing harassed the people she knew so much, nothing rendered them so apologetic and uncomfortable, as their social obligations to persons they did not consider socially creditable. She resolved never to find herself in such a position.

Such a point of view is all very well with a docile husband, but when the person concerned is an only and much beloved son the matter takes on a different appearance, so different, indeed, that Mrs. Exeter's footman was even then inquiring whether Mrs. Burlington was at home. Mrs. Burlington was the wife of the principal partner in the firm where Bobby Exeter had found his first business opportunity. Beyond this nothing was known of her except that she had suddenly appeared on the horizon of Newport and had bought one of its most beautiful houses, to which, it seemed, no one had so far taken the trouble to go.

Hearing that she was in, Mrs. Exeter descended and mounted the steps with the assistance of her tall Empire parasol, trailing her pretty painted muslin skirts along the red carpet. The house had formerly belonged to a friend, and she noted in the blank gilded drawing-room how great a difference was made by the absence of certain admirably arranged flowers and ornaments, and especially of some familiar photographs. She wondered whether Mrs. Burlington displayed discretion, or the lack of it, in not exhibiting the portraits of her intimates.

An instant later her hostess entered. She was a young woman, slight, and so obviously well dressed that she ran the risk of entirely sinking her own individuality in that of her dressmaker. Yet this could never be wholly true, for her own personality was sufficiently striking. Her hair was pale blond, her skin somewhat dark and her blue eyes brilliant, more on account of their quality than their color. Her appearance presented—so slightly that to name it is to exaggerate it—the merest suggestion of a ferret. There was in her bearing that mingling of intelligence and sharpness that has made the American business man what he is.

The two ladies talked pleasantly on topics not absorbing to either until Mrs. Exeter, with her sweet, gracious smile, mentioned “your husband’s kindness to my son.” At this the other, instead of acknowledging the gracious expression, slowly rose to her feet and stood looking down at her guest, half-puzzled, half-amused.

“Do you know, Mrs. Exeter,” she said, “I’ve been on the point of coming to see you a great many times in the last few days?”

“I should always have been glad to see you,” answered Mrs. Exeter, polite but mystified.

Mrs. Burlington laughed. “*Would you?*” she said. “That’s the question. To be brief, you are in possession of something that I would give a good deal for, and I am in possession of something for which you would give anything in the world. There seems to be some basis for barter here, don’t you think?”

Mrs. Exeter liked neither the tone nor the substance of this speech, and she noted mentally that this was probably the inevitable consequence of making any advance to this sort of person, but she said, still pleasantly: “Oh, if you want to talk business, let my husband have the pleasure of coming to see you.”

“I’m afraid that wouldn’t do. My business had better be settled between us alone.”

“Then,” said Mrs. Exeter, getting

up and holding out her hand, “I’m sure it is useless to discuss it, for, you see, I am confident there is nothing you possess which I am so discourteous as to envy. Good-bye.”

“One moment,” put in the other woman, betraying a certain nervousness under her air of resolution. “You can’t think of this naturally enough, because you don’t know about it. Let me tell you. You speak of my husband’s goodness to your son. Have you any idea how far it extends? Did you ever suspect that for the last two months it was the only thing that stood between your son and a criminal action?” She paused. “He’s \$50,000 short in his accounts.”

Mrs. Exeter was silent an instant, and then gasped: “You shall have the money to-morrow.”

To her figures had always presented such mysterious uncertainty that the idea of being short in accounts seemed to her more a fresh proof of their accursedness than of any intentional knavery on the part of the accountant. Besides, like so many mothers, she did not think of her son as a responsible person, to be judged as worthy or unworthy, but instinctively considered him as a creature apart from standards, whose advocate she must always be, whose partisan she was without hearing the facts. She knew, nevertheless, that the world held a different estimate in such matters, knew that her son’s career was ruined unless she could fulfil the promise she had just made, and this, so far as she could see, was quite impossible.

She took a step toward the door, however, as if to end the interview, but Mrs. Burlington again stopped her.

“But I don’t want the money,” she said, “and it really wouldn’t do any good, unless Mr. Burlington contracted to keep the story secret. Everyone would know that Bobby Exeter had been \$50,000 behind, and even if anyone remembered to add that his family had eventually paid up it wouldn’t help him much in

most people's eyes. The question is simply, will Burlington & Co. keep the thing quiet? Well, yes, I'll agree they shall, on one condition."

"What?" Mrs. Exeter had asked almost before she knew it.

"That you take me up; make me smart; make me one of these people."

Mrs. Exeter looked at her. "Oh, but why," she said—"why do you want such a thing? All my life I have gone among the people who were naturally my friends, just as you have gone among those who were naturally yours. What reason—what reason, in heaven's name, have you for supposing that mine are any more agreeable than yours?"

The ferret aspect became a trifle more apparent in Mrs. Burlington as she answered: "Thank you very much for the compliment to my friends, but you see the point isn't whether I'm a fool to want it, but that I do. I see these people every day driving or at the beach, and I read about their parties, or," she added, defiantly, "I hear about them from my servants, and I don't know one of them, not one, and it makes me wretched—it makes me feel physically sick to hear their names. I have just as much as they, and I'm a cleverer woman. So now you know what I want and what I'll do to get it."

"I think you overrate my power—" Mrs. Exeter began, but was at once swept aside.

"No, I don't. You can do it if you wish. Oh, I don't mean ask me to two or three big entertainments. I mean have me with you all the time. Tell me what to do and what not to do. Talk to your friends about me until they believe I'm something worth while. There, I know you can if you want to. Is your son's secret worth it?"

"I must have time to think it over. I must speak to my son," Mrs. Exeter answered, unsteadily.

"Well, upon my word, isn't that rather shabby of you? If you speak to him, of course he'll let you off. He won't let you pay the price of his misdeeds. If I know Bobby Exeter,

he may be weak under temptation, but he won't force an unwelcome intimacy on his mother to save himself. If you want the whole thing to be made public I can't think of a better way than to consult your son before you sacrifice yourself to help him."

There was some force in this argument. It was quite true, Mrs. Exeter saw at once, that her high-spirited Bobby would refuse to let her make such a bargain, however advantageous to him. If she was to save him she must do it secretly and at once, certainly without committing herself to paper, as his present absence would have demanded.

"You know," Mrs. Burlington suggested, gently, "a young man in his position has temptations. My husband often says that he blames himself as much as the boy for having subjected him to such a test."

At this unexpected kindness the tears came to Mrs. Exeter's eyes, and at the word temptation all Bobby's extravagant tastes leaped to her remembrance. She recalled that twice of late he had appealed to his father for an increase in his allowance, and had appealed in vain. She had herself seen less of him for the last two months than ever before. A thousand small incidents of this nature occurred to her mind to strike conviction deeper.

She, like most women, had but a vague and impersonal idea of masculine standards of honor. She felt that her son had been unfortunate rather than wrong. Her first desire to speak to him died away. It would be too cruel for her to be the person to drag him through the humiliation of confession. Whatever she did could be done without spoken word between them.

It was really surprising, in the course of the next few days, how many people asked each other whether they knew Mrs. Burlington, "that delightful friend of Mrs. Exeter's." Before two weeks had gone by nine women out of ten pronounced themselves extremely fond of her. She

was so well dressed, so intelligent, and withal possessed of so much *usage du monde* as, not a few added, was only to be expected of anyone you met at Mrs. Exeter's.

This lady had indeed brought all the weight of her intelligence and experience to bear. She knew that it was not enough for an aspirant to be *well* dressed; her appearance must be so authoritative in such matters that merely to behold her was an education in feminine attire. She taught her pupil—a difficult task—the necessity of being agreeable without being aggressive, taught her that it made no difference, was perhaps undesirable, that she herself should be conversationally brilliant if only she succeeded in making others think themselves so; and above all, Mrs. Exeter impressed upon her the advantages of commending herself to unattractive husbands of attractive wives, those unfortunates whom no one has ever wanted to sit next to at dinner. It was along this line that Mrs. Burlington achieved her most conspicuous successes. Hosts who for years had sat glum and neglected at the foot of their own tables suddenly found themselves provided with a companion willing to exert herself to the utmost for their amusement. Naturally these gentlemen, surprised and flattered, clamored for her society; naturally their wives, amiably anxious to keep them happy, readily acceded to their demands.

In the midst of this excitement Bobby Exeter arrived from New York to spend Saturday with his parents. His mother drove down to the boat to meet him. He complained bitterly of the heat in town. It was not, she felt, her imagination that he looked worn and aged.

On the way home they passed Mrs. Burlington, and a cordial greeting was given and returned. Bobby turned to his mother—was it in surprise or anxiety? She answered his look.

"I've seen her a great deal lately. She dines with us to-night."

"Well, I can't see what you see

in—" he began, and stopped. "Do you really like her?"

She felt tempted to ask what other motive could be prompting her, but contented herself with saying: "She's been tremendously taken up."

"Bless me!" said Bobby. "What next!"

The subject dropped, to be taken up later by Bobby himself. He wished his mother hadn't asked the woman to dine. Old Burlington was well enough, but his wife—She was vulgar; she was pushing; she was "on the make." Bobby had supposed his mother had better taste.

To be attacked on the score of taste was too much for Mrs. Exeter. She said, bitterly: "Apparently it doesn't occur to you that I may have reasons beside my own enjoyment."

"My advancement, you mean?" he asked, sharply. "Why, then, drop it, by all means. I don't think I can stay much longer with Burlington." He paused. The carriage stopped at the door, and he added, hastily: "Don't tell my father."

The word "*can*" struck terror to his mother's mind. If he had only said he did not wish to stay much longer with his present employer! She answered nothing, and went to her own room dispirited. Before his arrival she had cherished a dim hope that he would treat the whole affair so lightly or so simply that it would be possible to speak of it, and that some explanation between them would follow. At first she had been encouraged by his evident dislike of her intimacy with Mrs. Burlington, for surely he would not be slow to grasp the advantage of the situation. Almost at once, however, she perceived that he had totally misapprehended it. He evidently thought, misled perhaps by her statements, that she had been only one of many to discover and like the wife of his chief. He supposed his secret safe, but doubtless considered it seriously threatened by the intimacy, which he continued to oppose with all his might.

And now his father, usually not

quick to notice moods, observed a change in him. He was silent and abstracted. Mrs. Exeter noted that he was never away from the house at mail time and always intercepted the postman at the door. Her heart sank, too, to see how continually his thoughts ran on money—a most unusual symptom in him—and how inevitably, when they were alone, he brought the conversation round to discuss some occupation that would bring him in a quick and large return.

She laid a trap for him by suggesting railroading, and almost wept aloud as he fell into it by declaring that for him this was one of the most impossible of careers; that he must have money within six months or he should never want it at all. This was plain talking.

"I can't see the reason for that, Bob," she said, faintly.

"You would if you knew everything," he responded, looking very gloomy and burying his head in his hands. For a second she feared he was about to tell her all, and suddenly losing courage, changed the subject.

Sunday evening he went back without having defined his position further. At parting Mrs. Exeter asked him, with some constraint, if he intended coming up for the following Sunday.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," he answered, "if I'm still in this part of the world. I've a great mind to go to the Klondike and find gold, or cut my throat."

"Perhaps that would be the best thing to do," his mother answered.

They looked at each other with intense eyes, and he went without speaking.

In the week that ensued Mrs. Burlington's triumphs became more and more striking. In all her suffering Mrs. Exeter could not but feel a certain glow of pride as she looked on the evidences of her own power. It was not so much that she had made Mrs. Burlington like as that she had made her likable; not so much that her influence had raised the woman

as that her corrections and advice had made the rise possible.

On Friday, much to his mother's surprise, Bobby appeared, unannounced and unexpected, still looking white, but complaining less of the heat. She fancied she saw in him the traces of a final determination. He admitted loss of weight.

She was not left long in doubt. Bobby was obviously seeking an interview with her, which she as carefully avoided. At last, the second evening of his stay, the matter was settled by Mr. Exeter's being called away while they were all sitting together after dinner. It took only a second for Bobby to fling himself beside her on the sofa and launch into, as her dazed mind discovered, the narrative of the one passion of his life.

Her name was Flora, and she was but eighteen. She was being taken abroad by her aunt in the Autumn to study music for years. If he couldn't do something before she went, if he couldn't make some definite proposal with the consent of his parents, and show some prospect of being able to marry, they would take her away and he should never see her again. They would marry her to an old German banker who was following her about like a dog. Wouldn't his mother, Bobby wanted to know, do something, do anything with his father?

To this and much more of the same sort Mrs. Exeter listened with the manner of one who has suddenly sat down under a cold waterfall. At last she was able to gasp out, "But in your position, Bobby, you should not think of matrimony."

"Oh, I know," he answered, "I ought to wait until I have an assured income, if I wait until I'm ninety. Marriage is a serious thing—well, it's not one-tenth as serious as letting the only woman you will ever love slip through your fingers."

"I was not thinking of your poverty," said his mother, who was not pleased that he was still ready to dupe her, "but of dishonor."

"What do you mean?" he asked,

growing quickly crimson, either from guilt or anger.

"Dear boy," said his mother, laying her hand on his, "understand, I never blamed you. I didn't speak before because I thought silence made it easier. I thought you understood, or I should have relieved your mind long ago, when I saw you looking so worn and anxious. Your secret is quite safe. The Burlingtons will never tell. Mrs. Burlington's social elevation has been the price I paid, dear Bobby, I need not say how gladly."

"But I don't understand. My secret? You don't mean that Mrs. Burlington has found out about Flora? How could she?"

"Flora! Don't be absurd, Bobby. Her husband told her about the \$50,000 that you—that was—" Mrs. Exeter began to cry feebly—"about the mistake in your books. I knew it was nothing but a mistake; I understood—"

"I wish to goodness I did. What did Mrs. Burlington tell you?" He shot a wild arrow at fiction in the hope of bringing down fact. "That I had stolen \$50,000 from the bank?"

His mother nodded convulsively. "She told me the first time we met—one day when I went to see her."

"And you believed her?"

"In a way she tried to be kind. She spoke of your temptations—"

"Now may heaven preserve us from our mothers!" cried Bobby, starting up.

There was a long silence. She wept on; he went and stood beside the table with his hands in his pockets. At last, without stooping to reproach, he said:

"Well, you know it was a lie."

"How could I tell? I knew nothing about it—"

"You knew all about *me*."

"But so little of business."

Bobby was sufficiently intelligent to see here the root of the whole matter and to know that she was suffering as poignantly as the most vindictive could desire.

"Well," he said, "that dreadful woman has done her trick all right. She has turned your lack of faith in me into a very pretty social success."

His mother sprang to the writing table.

MADAM:

The explanation with my son which you so skilfully contrived to postpone has this moment taken place. You will scarcely be surprised to learn that the honor of your future acquaintance will not be mine, and that my friends will not be slow in learning the character of a person for whom I cannot too deeply regret having made myself responsible.

She signed it and despatched it with all possible speed.

An answer returned almost as quickly by Mrs. Burlington's footman. Her servants had lately been put into new liveries, and none presented a smarter appearance.

MY DEAR MRS. EXETER:

Few examples of maternal appreciation have afforded me as much amusement as your immediate belief in my assertions in regard to your son. Exactly how much either of you will gain by a public statement of your low opinion of his honesty you are doubtless better fitted to estimate than I. If, however, you intend to declare open war, it must be a satisfaction to one of your generous disposition to know that owing to your discriminating kindness we shall at least meet as equals. In any case, let me take this opportunity of thanking you for the pleasant and, as I think you will find, permanent position you have afforded me among the number of your delightful friends.

Cordially yours,
BERTHA BURLINGTON.



DE L'AMOUR

By Edgar Saltus

PEOPLE have wondered why Mr. Austin was made Poet Laureate. The reason is quite simple. Mr. Austin lives on very good terms with his wife, and that pleased the Queen. It pleases us, too. So, also, does the result. It constitutes a fine case of what a boulevardier might—if he thought of it—describe as *lauriat mediocritas*. Moreover, it shows, or seems to show, that connubial virtues are more estimable than literary sins. That is quite as it should be. But the converse of the proposition is equally true. Domestic difficulties are preferable to halting hexameters. The world is filled with good husbands. Good verse is more scant. For that matter, the better the verse the worse the husband. An ideal spouse would be both a perfect lover and a perfect poet. But no mere mortal has succeeded in being both, for any length of time, at least, and very naturally, too. The Muse is highly jealous. The task of serving two masters is nothing to having two mistresses on your hands.

These views have, we fear, a false air of originality. But we claim no copyright on them. They have been running about the bookshelves ever since books were shelved. Said Michelangelo: "Art is wife enough for me." Said Flaubert: "However refractory the Muse may be, she is better than any woman." Said Bacon: "Matrimony is an impediment to great enterprises." Kant, Newton, Beethoven, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Gibbon, Macaulay, Handel, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Camoëns, Voltaire, Cavour and Chauncey De-

pew appear to have agreed with him. In such fine company we may not presume to intrude. But we are quite sure that there are plenty of people who long for heaven if for no other reason than because there is no marrying or giving in marriage there. We have not a doubt but that while Mrs. Carlyle was among us she felt pretty much that way, too. We have not a doubt but that Mrs. Donizetti did also. For Donizetti used to get very indignant at that lady, which was not philosophic, and occasionally beat her, which was certainly not polite. Even so, the exercise must have been good for him. One day, five minutes after laying her out, he composed the "*Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali*," an aria which a seraph might envy—the most bewitching in the entire Italian repertory, and which anyone who has heard the last act of "Lucia" will recall. Exercise of a similar nature Byron took with his little Guiccioli, and with proper poetic results. One of the liveliest scenes in "Les Trois Mousquetaires" was evolved by Dumas just after he had torn hair by the handful from the head of a young person who honored him with her affection. "Were her tears but pearls," he announced, "I would make a necklace of them."

These incidents happened a long time ago, and fail to stir us very deeply. They do not demonstrate much, either, and what they do it would not be honest to print. But, in conjunction with others, they lead us to assume a few little things; for instance, that had Petrarch got as close to Laura as he wished, he would

have maltreated her or the Muse would have maltreated him. We assume, with equal ease, that had Beatrice been a reality instead of a dream, the world would be minus a volume or two of good verse. We assume with equal readiness that had the affairs of Ariosto been as immaterial, the world would be plus a volume or two which it lacks.

"The position of lover," said Byron, "is not a sinecure." Nor is it. There are times and occasions when it is hard labor. It is a position suited only to the mentally idle. In the life known as cerebral it stultifies when it does not wreck. Consider Sappho. Because a little mick preferred another mouth to hers she killed herself. And consider Antony. Because of a viper of the Nile he flung away the sovereignty of half the world. Abélard should have known better than to behave as he did. On the other hand, had he omitted to, his name would be the echo of nothing and that of Héloïse be lost. Such is fame.

Such, too, is the fame of Tasso. His verse is less interesting than his woes. The latter were quite poignant. Goethe wrote a play about them, Donizetti an opera and Delacroix added a picture. The picture represents the poet in prison. That is a fine place for a gentleman. But Tasso, instead of confining himself, as he should have done, to the raising of anapests and *rime amorose*, found, in the wide leisures of the Court of Ferrara, nothing better to do than to make up to Leonore of Este. The lady did not object. On the contrary. But her brother, the Duke of Ferrara, did. By way of putting a stop to the proceedings he had Tasso tossed into a madhouse. Whether or not the honor of the lady was at stake is a detail, immaterial at that. There are women who discredit virtue in affecting to possess it. We have not a doubt that Leonore was one of them. Even so, and even otherwise, we do not blame the Duke. We have noted before, and perhaps may be permitted to note again, that there is nothing so per-

versive as a young poet, except an old one.

How perverse Tasso succeeded in becoming we may surmise and never know. What we do know is that he got what he deserved. He ought to have left all that sort of thing to her. In the case of an ordinary individual we should of course strum a different guitar. Ordinary individuals are free to do as they like, and be hanged to them. But the thinker has a mission. For the furtherance of that mission every extraneous desire and each subsidiary whim should be locked in cages, where, for the fun of the thing now and then, he may be permitted to go and see how they are. Women should be to him the *joujoux* they used to be and not the *objets de luxe* they have become. Better still, he should have everything, even to sex, in his brain.

Seraglios are delightful to read about and particularly to write about, but to live in them must be deadly dull. Personally we have never tried it. It is true we have lacked the opportunity. Otherwise we should doubtless jump at the chance. But then, thank the Lord, we have no mission. It is a great thing to be an ordinary individual. *Le métier de poète laisse à désirer*. Just how much the business of poet leaves to be desired it would take the ghost of Tasso to tell, of de Musset, too, of Byron as well. There are three whom the love of woman has led from deserts of disgust into oases of ennui. There are three whose genius women have slaughtered. It is only that we may not seem to know more than we do that we refrain from citing three hundred. Yet while we are at it there is a case so pertinent, so recent and so picturesque that it would be a shame to let it go. Here it is.

During the Third Empire a young man appeared at the Tuileries. Eugénie kissed him, and in the process declared him to be the handsomest prince in the world. At the compliment the young man blushed, and blushed still more at the embrace. His name was Ludwig. By profession

he was King. In addition, he followed the entirely genteel avocation of lover. But *en amateur* merely. He had yet to learn that the art of loving and the art of being loved are separate and distinct. It was his cousin who taught him. This young woman, afterward Duchesse d'Alençon, lived in the heart of a Bavarian forest. A poet who chanced to encounter her there has related that he mistook her for a sylph—one of those enchanting apparitions that dwell in dim green woods and long German ballads, and whom princes used to woo. Ludwig mistook her for a saint. To err poets and princes are liable alike.

There is, a thinker announced, as much mud in the upper classes as in the lower, only, he added, in the former it is gilded. In the case of the young woman Ludwig appears to have discovered the mud, but with the gilt off and the guilt on. Yet not, of course, at once. Meanwhile the girl intended no wrong, and that, perhaps, because she never would have considered wrong anything she wished to do. Moreover, she was very pretty, and pretty girls have more incentives than those who are not. Then, too, she had another excuse. It had been predicted that she would be burned alive. No one believes much in predictions unless Time comes along and verifies them. In her case Time did. A few years ago she was caught in the fire that occurred in the Paris Bazaar. With a fate such as that before her it may be she tried to make the most of the worst. If the supposition be correct her success was remarkable. She ruined her life and that of her lover as well.

Ludwig looked as if he had stepped from a fairy tale. As he looked he acted. He charmed peasants and empresses. He suggested romance incarnate and enthroned. These suggestions his cousin lived to see him change into realities. She lived to see him dot the country he ruled with palaces of enchantment. She lived, too, to see him hide himself in them. She lived to see the handsomest prince in the world change

into a bloated sot. She lived to realize that it was her work, and so realizing, perhaps was glad to die. For, if not a saint, at least she was human. When ultimately, in cups of champagne strained through violets, he tried to drown his reason, she lost her own. Subsequently, as noted, she lost her life. It may be that it was fate that felled her, yet in that case it is a pity that fate was so slow. Had it but throttled her in the cradle or smothered her in the green and quiet of the slumbrous wood, Europe might have enjoyed the spectacle of an ideal King reigning ideally. But the discovery that the girl who had imparadised his heart was no better than the law allows transformed *Lohengrin* into *Hamlet*. He turned his back on her, and incidentally on the world. There developed within him a horror of being seen. At Munich a mechanical device enabled him to be served by invisible hands. When he drove it was at night. Now and again he disappeared entirely. No one knew where he was. Infrequently he received at dinner. The guest whom he preferred was Louis XIV. With him he was quite at home. The royal phantom came and went at his bidding. Yet that which pleased him most was to stroll, crowned and sceptred, through the splendidly lighted halls of Herrenchiemsee and people the empty rooms with the great poets and princes of the past. With these, too, he was at home and every inch the King, King of the Kingdom of Beauty and of Dreams—of Chastity, too, for never once was the mystic music with which he flooded those mystic halls broken by the discord of a woman's voice. His cousin had cured him of that. *Et voilà ce que c'est que l'Amour.*

After the episode with this lady the life of Ludwig of Bavaria was a long anachronism, but a very beautiful one, marred only by the insanity that overtook him in the end. That insanity was in the family. His brother is mad as a hatter, and his grandfather lost over Lola Montez the few wits that he had. Behind

these people, back through the chronicles of the House of Wittelsbach, there are chapters choked with crime, scenes smeared with sin, a story of calamity singularly straight, one in which other descendants, notably the Empress of Austria and her son Rudolph, had their undoubted share. For the purposes of this paragraph it would be convenient to assume that there is a curse on the clan. And if there be, that curse is love. In any event, it is the cause of their dementia. But then, apart from gold, is not love the cause of every folly that has occurred since the days when, for Helen's sake, the war of the world was fought? Truly, when you come to sit down and think it over, or even, as we do, stand up and dictate, the panorama of unhallowed disasters that unrolls does not make one much in love with love.

Yet though, like gold, it has its defects, like gold, too, it has its charms. Every reputable writer has denounced it and disreputably enjoyed all he could get. To say one thing and mean something else happens to all, even to the best. But the main point about it, and which, as such, we have left to the last, is the fact that concerning it doctors disagree. That, however, is natural enough. Love has a hundred symptoms, a thousand phases. It may come at first sight—which does not mean second sight. It may come from propinquity, and also from the lack of it. The less we see of people the more delightful they appear. It may come of curiosity, which is the instinct of self-improvement. It may come of sympathy, which is the pleasure we take in the unhappiness of someone else. It may come of antipathy, for in every affection there is the germ of hate. It may come of

mutual attraction. That is very common. It may come of natural selection. That is very rare.

Natural selection presupposes a discernment that leads a man through mazes of women to one woman in particular, to the woman who to him is the one woman in all the world, to the woman who has been awaiting him and who recognizes him when he comes. And it is just because the process is exceptional that doctors disagree, husbands and wives also, sweethearts and swains as well, poets and princesses, too. Therein lies the root of the disasters that it has given us a real pleasure to relate. It is, indeed, a pleasant subject. But it is one that would have perplexed Euclid, and for all we know to the contrary, doubtless did. The more abundantly it is written about the more abundant does ignorance appear. For love is one of those phenomena which elude exact knowledge. A huckster of phrases thought he summed it up in defining it as the Why and Wherefore of Creation. Another huckster nauseatingly labeled it the sweetest shape of pain.

Everything being possible, it may be either and even both. Yet studies and statistics have rather inclined us to the theory that, apart from pathological conditions, love is either the affection of somebody else or else the fusion of two egotisms, the contact of two epiderms, the tragedy of those that lack it, the boredom of those that don't, and in this country the prime incentive to matrimony, which also studies and statistics have led us to regard as three months of adoration, three months of introspection, and thirty years of toleration, with the children to begin it all over anew. *Et voilà ce que c'est que l'Amour.*



CHARMING CREDULITY

BESSIE—Why does Cholly carry a rabbit's foot?

LAURA—Someone told him it would cure a hair-lip.

GHOSTS IN NAUMKEAG

By W. B. Cohen

I have heard, (but not believ'd) the
spirits of the dead may walk again.

—*Winter's Tale.*

THE Higginses had moved to Naumkeag at a certain point of prosperity in Mr. Higgins's leather business, because in Naumkeag the social fortress is less impregnable than in Boston. The Higginses bought a house in Hazel street, of course, and Mrs. Higgins promptly emigrated to the spirituality and boy choir of St. Xantippe's.

Mrs. Higgins's knowledge of how to give a dinner amounted almost to inspiration, and Mrs. Higgins's social presence was all that vehement good form, vast though discriminating amiability and one hundred and eighty pounds avoirdupois can assure. Naturally, in half a dozen years the Higgins blood was virtually as blue as lapis lazuli. Mrs. Higgins matronized the Assemblies and possessed a calling list that was the *Almanach de Gotha* of Naumkeag's exclusive circles. Beyond this she recognized the division of mankind into three classes—society, persons and the masses. She spoke emphatically of the masses and was a burnished tower of strength in the Naumkeag Associated Charities.

In half a dozen years Miss Miranda Higgins grew from the short skirts and pigtail of twelve to the maidenly perfection of eighteen. At twelve this young lady's membership in the Hazel street afternoon dancing class had been regarded by her mamma as an extreme social consummation. Later, after Mrs. Higgins's intimacy with Miss Augusta Potts had ripened

and borne fruit, she looked back with mingled mortification and forgetfulness on so limited a point of view.

Miss Augusta Potts was a young lady of about forty-five who was a specialist on Naumkeag society. As other young ladies are attracted variously by Love, Art or the Uplifting of Mankind, so Miss Augusta ran all to ancestors and genealogy. The Potts family, to begin with, was an extremely genealogical one. Indeed, Miss Augusta rarely spoke of herself individually. It was always "We Pottses as a family," as one might say: "We Plantagenets," or "We Schleswig-Holsteins." There was more than a suspicion in Naumkeag that Christopher Columbus and George Washington were merely Pottses in disguise.

Under Miss Augusta's guidance Mrs. Higgins came to perceive that the most conspicuous figures within the Naumkeag social ramparts were, as a rule, those who had achieved their enviable position recently, whose aristocratic growth owed its fierce luxuriance rather to assiduous hothouse methods than immemorial husbandry.

As a matter of fact, Naumkeag society is a beautiful though somewhat complicated pattern of rings within rings. The contingent of the newly grand, though it lends to Naumkeag society that superlative flavor for which it is justly celebrated, is the outside ring. Next inside are those very agreeable individuals who have known the right people as far back as the Civil War. These have had time to grow accustomed to the rarefied social atmosphere and to forget any little awkward circumstances connected with

their forbears, such as livery stables or butcher carts or fishing dories. Still further within is the famous sea-captain ring, magnificent old families—in a greater or less state of repair—founded by those high-complexioned, profane, God-fearing old skippers who brought the wealth of the Orient into Naumkeag harbor when Naumkeag still eclipsed Boston as the great seaport of New England. Innermost of all is that charmed circle of ancient houses whose ancestors fought and prayed and hanged one another's grandmothers for witches, and incidentally laid the foundations of Naumkeag, before such innovations as the American eagle and the Stars and Stripes were dreamed of. These personages, it should be added, are no longer a considerable factor in Naumkeag society. Whether they were drawn by the more metropolitan attractions of Boston or whether, being the innermost of so many circles, they felt the atmosphere to be somewhat close, has never been settled. Their exodus to Boston, however, marks the reconstruction of Naumkeag society along its present engaging lines.

Mrs. Higgins did not learn these facts all at once, because they are really much more complicated than they seem. The circles shade one into another almost imperceptibly, and it takes a practiced eye to distinguish the wavering dividing lines. Besides, they criss-cross most confusingly, the result of intermarriages between component parts of different circles before grandfathers were such a craze in fashionable society. But Miss Augusta was an expert on all fine technical questions of "Who is who?" Probably there was not a genealogical tree in the county of any girth or greenness up which she had not shinned and examined branch, leaf, graftings and green twigs with unsparing eye. And under such inspiration Mrs. Higgins was bound to develop rapidly.

As a result, in a very few years she found her soul craving something more than either of the two outside

circles could offer. Thus, by the time Miranda was sixteen, Mrs. Higgins's fondest dreams pictured that young lady as presiding, some day, over a household on Hazel street, to which old Nankin china and genuine family heirloom furniture, of the sea-captain period, should lend their charm. Everybody in Naumkeag society has a house full of antique furniture. How much of this is lineally descended, how much has made its way into select households from some less restricted source of family treasures, it would be difficult—and imprudent—to say.

Having attained so much there was no reason why Mrs. Higgins should not feel that she had earned contentment. She was the possessor of an irrepressible sympathy with those names that led all the rest in Naumkeag society. She was able to regard with lenient interest and incredulity the small successes of later comers than herself in the Naumkeag social paradise. In short, Mrs. Higgins would have been quite willing to refrain from further conquests. But at this happy juncture in her affairs Fate stepped in—Fate and that same original old Serpent, with the most plausible and seductive apple that was ever dangled before a fond mother's eye. And Fate was embodied in the pleasing person of Miss Miranda.

For Miranda did not loiter at sixteen. She went to seventeen and then to eighteen; and at eighteen she came out, in white tulle and cherry ribbons, at the most exclusive coming-out party imaginable. And this was the beginning of the end of Mrs. Higgins's well-earned peace of mind.

II

MIRANDA as a débutante at eighteen was a surpassing success. Personally she was a foolish, sentimental young thing, with a shocking habit of indiscriminate friendliness. She had unexceptionable eyes and danced marvelously. On Naumkeag Assembly

nights young gentlemen came from Beverly, Boston, Brookline and Cambridge for three steps with her on the polished floor of Winthrop Hall.

Before the Winter was half over Mrs. Higgins had seen visions. One day she actually found the impression growing stealthily in her mind that after all Nankin china, antique furniture and Hazel street might be the least bit in the world—shall we say provincial? And Naumkeag sea captains? Very worthy persons, without doubt, but were they not very much in trade? Medford rum and missionaries and rice and tea and jute—what a peculiar odor!

Mrs. Higgins looked out on the great world and observed how much more extensive Beacon street was than Hazel street; how much more arborescent the family trees. Sea captains?—Colonial governors! Antique furniture?—household wares from the *Mayflower*, the *Santa Maria*! Nankin china?—family plate! Without doubt, to an unconfined soul Naumkeag had its limitations. And meanwhile Mrs. Higgins set the seal of good form on the ancient mythology by turning herself into a benign maternal Argus. For the delegations from Boston and Brookline appeared at Winthrop Hall and the Higgins front door in increasing numbers. As the Winter advanced it must have been plain to the blindest of parents that Miranda must soon receive inducements to take up her abode, as is commended of St. Paul, in each and several of these localities. And Miranda was a foolish, sentimental young thing.

Even Miss Augusta began to prove insufficient for Mrs. Higgins at this point. For Miss Augusta, infallible as she was within her sphere, had never dreamed to outsoar willow ware and Naumkeag's ancient marine. Mrs. Higgins's soul, on the contrary, was expanding as if fed on yeast. She gazed on Miranda, and there sprang up before her mind's eye such family trees as only certain hallowed precincts of Boston could bear—genealogical flora with their roots firmly imbedded in the dark ages—a grove,

a perfect forest, that rustled deliciously and seemed to beckon to her.

She gazed on Miranda, and her imagination sat down at ancestor-in-law dinner tables groaning under the weight of family plate. She blushed when she thought of the obscure Mongolian origin of Nankin blue, and she became a student of family plate. Nay, she specialized it, as one specializes the eyes of crustaceans or the particle *du*. And finally, as if her waking hours would not suffice for the delightful contemplation, Mrs. Higgins dreamed wonderful exclusive dreams. Night after night, when her eyes closed in slumber, the silver services of the world passed before her in review, innumerable, precious, antique shapes, their lustre worn dull by the congratulatory caresses of the centuries, rich in crests and coats-of-arms with which an H might be easily and artistically intertwined!

So, gazing on Miranda, on the unguarded frontier of her consciousness wild thoughts danced war-dances. Beacon street—Newport—New York—London—Paris—barons—earls—dukes! Mrs. Higgins sighed and shivered and felt a thrill. The simple pleasures of Naumkeag were no more for her.

III

THE Higginses lived in one half of one of those old Colonial houses with hand-carved woodwork and splendid staircases for which Naumkeag is famous. The other half of the Higgins house had been vacant for a year. Miss Cad Nourse, aged seventy, had formerly owned and lived in it. No one in society had known Miss Cad except on a purely good Samaritan basis. Miss Augusta said that her family had once been undeniable—the sea-captain ring—but it had decayed steadily for seventy-five years, and Miss Cad was the last of her line. Miss Augusta's and Mrs. Higgins's combined efforts had failed to evolve a reason why Miss Cad insisted on wearing out her poverty-

stricken old existence under the very eyes of the gallant and the gay on Hazel street. At one time there had even been an atrocious rumor that she thought of letting rooms! How much more sensible and comfortable a simple cottage on some quiet back street! But Miss Cad had stayed and continued the decaying process where generations of her family had decayed before her. Until one day—perhaps her heart smote her with the enormity of her imposition—she consented to die.

Whereupon the house had been boarded up, with all of Miss Cad's time-worn effects standing in their places, and had remained so, a growing dinginess and aggravation to the best families. It was said that the property had reverted to a distant relative, but this was merely another rumor.

Mrs. Higgins shivered slightly whenever she looked at the empty house. Miss Cad had been a trial, but the possibility of compromising neighbors which the tenantless domicile offered was appalling. What a temptation was offered to some socially unwashed family to come and bathe in the fierce light that beat on the Higgins front door!

To her secret soul Mrs. Higgins admitted that she had reached a point when even the innermost circles of Naumkeag could offer few allurements to her as neighbors. For by this time, waking and sleeping, she had supped off the family plate of two continents. She had shaken hands with Governor Winthrop and William the Conqueror. Naumkeag? Hazel street? sea captains? Was she not connected—through her daughter—with the immortal goddesses?

IV

MRS. HIGGINS saw the whole thing from her parlor window. A cab drew up before Miss Cad's house. There were two dingy-looking trunks behind and several queer-looking boxes on the driver's seat. The cab

door opened and a young man stepped out, carrying a bag and several more queer boxes. The young man's looks did not commend him to Mrs. Higgins; there was something about him that strongly suggested the middle classes. The side of his face nearest her bore a scar from the corner of the eye down over the jaw, and he limped slightly as he crossed the sidewalk.

"What a nice-looking young man!" said Miranda, who was in the room.

"My dear," said Mrs. Higgins, "will you ask Betty to bring in the tea?"

The young man disappeared into Miss Cad's house after a struggle with the front door. Then he came out again to help the cabman with the trunks. He seemed to Mrs. Higgins to handle trunks like a hotel porter. On the end of each trunk were the initials S. D.

"How exciting!" said Miranda, who was again in the room.

"My dear," said Mrs. Higgins, "you might ask Nora to light the gas."

A few moments later the shutters of Miss Cad's second-story front room opened with indecorous slams, and a light streamed out.

That night Naumkeag society knew that Miss Cad's house had a tenant—not a family whom one knew or might consent to know, not even an indigent but harmless old maid, but a dubious-looking, single-handed, impossible male unknown, dropped down with outlandish luggage from no one knew where, with no further credentials than the key of Miss Cad's front door and whatever identity might lurk under the irresponsible initials S. D.

The next afternoon the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne, rector of St. Xantippe's, made a parish call on Mrs. Higgins. The Rev. Mr. Browne was very popular with the ladies of St. Xantippe's. He was broad in his views and had a lovely voice. Otherwise he was a small, quiet man, extremely youthful-looking and ex-

tremely diffident. In this last quality, of course, St. Xantippe's recognized something painfully mediocre. The Rev. Mr. Browne appeared to be unaware of the fact that the Higher Criticism has entirely discredited humility and self-doubt in the Episcopal clergy. In place of Omniscience and the other modern signs of Apostolic succession he merely blushed and looked confused. Still, St. Xantippe's comforted itself with the thought that its rector was young and would grow spiritually.

Mrs. Higgins had numerous important matters to discuss with the Rev. Mr. Browne—the girls' sewing class, the St. Xantippe's vaudeville and parish fair and the reorganization of the boy choir; but this afternoon her mind would hold but one subject. Although the Rev. Mr. Browne had heard several fragmentary versions, she proceeded to give him an eye-witness account of the suspicious arrival.

"Two dilapidated trunks," Mrs. Higgins was saying, "and half a dozen outrageous-looking boxes, with S. D. painted on the end of them, whatever S. D. may stand for——"

At this moment Mrs. Higgins was interrupted by a peculiar occurrence. The Rev. Mr. Browne, who had been leaning back in his chair, politely attentive, suddenly sat bolt upright, blushing furiously.

"S. D.!" exclaimed the Rev. Mr. Browne, somewhat wildly. "Strange-looking boxes! Did you say the initials were S. D.? What sort of a looking man was he, Mrs. Higgins?"

Mrs. Higgins for a moment felt mildly alarmed. The Rev. Mr. Browne was forgetting his clerical dignity and repose. He was, in fact, painfully excited. He sat on the edge of his chair, his voice husky, his whole person tremulous with some half-suppressed emotion. Then the scent of something extraordinary partially effaced Mrs. Higgins's alarm.

"Why, he was an extremely ordinary looking person," she said, "with a small mustache—and a scar—and a

limp. Perhaps you know of him, Mr. Browne. Is there anything dreadful about him? Perhaps——"

Mrs. Higgins did not finish. The Rev. Mr. Browne had danced toward her and seized her hand in a grip that made her wince.

"Very extraordinary!" he said. "Pardon my haste—regret very much—very much obliged—very sorry——"

Before Mrs. Higgins could catch her breath he was out in the hall, still mumbling incoherently. She heard him open the front door, and from the window saw him descend the steps unsteadily. Then he stepped in front of Miss Cad's house and whistled hideously!

In a flash a window in Miss Cad's house went up, and Mrs. Higgins saw her beloved rector prance madly on the sidewalk.

"Steve, Steve!" screamed the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne.

The next moment a figure in a red smoking-jacket, with wildly disordered hair, tumbled down Miss Cad's steps and fell into the Rev. Mr. Browne's arms, and the pair leaped madly up and down, while the Rev. Mr. Browne beat his companion on the back with his immaculate silk hat.

The world swam before Mrs. Higgins's eyes.

V

THERE had not been such excitement in Naumkeag society since the Marquis de Lafayette had danced with Naumkeag's belles in Winthrop Hall over a hundred years ago. At first there was a dreadful rumor that the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne had gone violently insane while making a parish call on Mrs. Higgins. Fifteen ladies called on Mrs. Higgins at once, but Mrs. Higgins was sick abed. As for the Rev. Mr. Browne, he had disappeared completely. At night the windows of Miss Cad's second-story front room shone brilliantly and sounds of revelry came out. In the course of the next day or two several

strange young men made their way from the railroad station to Miss Cad's door, and a prominent parishioner of St. Xantippe's, passing the house at a late hour, thought he recognized the voice of his rector insisting that he was the son of a son of a son of a son of a gambolier.

Within three days Naumkeag society was on the verge of nervous prostration, when the Rev. Mr. Browne suddenly appeared again, a trifle pale and a sleepless look about his eyes, but without a suspicion of dementia. And thereupon Naumkeag society had a genuine sensation.

S. D.; Stephen Duff; Captain Stephen Duff, Royal Chinese Navy, commander of one of the Emperor of China's war-ships in the battle of Yalu; a cutlass slash on his left cheek from the hands of a Japanese boarder; a body simply filled with Japanese bullets and fragments of shells and other warlike material, which pained him in warm weather and made him limp all the time; and finally, distant cousin and heir of Miss Cad, and chum of the Rev. Mr. Browne at Harvard ten years before.

The young ladies of Naumkeag had never heard of anything half so romantic. Their hearts swelled with pity at the Japanese bullets and shells. Afternoon walks invariably led past Miss Cad's front door, and sympathetic if hasty glances were directed toward the second-story front windows. Then Mrs. Grayfoil, whose originality and daring constantly set Naumkeag aghast, invited the Rev. Mr. Browne and his friend to dine; and although there was a shadow of disappointment that the stranger wore a swallow-tail instead of yellow and purple silks, and ate with a fork instead of chop-sticks, the young ladies who graced the occasion pronounced him, in that delightful diction peculiar to the daughters of Naumkeag's exclusive families, "simply grand."

But Mrs. Higgins, who had been convalescent, took to her bed again. To her mind her new neighbor sug-

gested nothing more or less than a Chinese laundry sign swinging from Miss Cad's doorway. Mrs. Higgins could have traced the development of family plate cream pitchers from Charlemagne to the present day, but she was not interested in Chinese history. And Miranda said, "How perfectly fascinating!"

VI

Two weeks before the next Assembly it was certain that Captain Duff, Royal Chinese Navy, was to be present, and the flutter of excitement among Naumkeag's impressionable young ladies grew first to a breeze and then to an adorable little gale.

Such glowing reports of these proceedings were brought by Miranda to her mother's chamber that Mrs. Higgins finally sat up and spoke at length on the frivolity of Youth and the decay of Naumkeag society generally. Miranda, by way of reply, suggested a new party gown, whereupon Mrs. Higgins recognized the call of duty, subdued her nerves by sheer force of will, and the night of the Assembly found her in the row of patronesses, somewhat wan, but with five of Miranda's eight bouquets in her lap, and sustained by the joy of the general who is on the field.

Directly across the hall sat Miranda. Mrs. Higgins knew she was there because at rare intervals, through the interstices of attendant cavaliers, she caught glimpses of her gown or her flowers.

With the strains of the first waltz Mrs. Higgins felt an inward glow. Miranda was dancing with family plate and pedigree self-imported from Boston for the occasion. Mrs. Higgins knew about this importation. It had been preceded by a considerable florist's stock of violets, and showed extremely interesting symptoms of aphasia under Miranda's eyes.

Mrs. Higgins gazed about her indulgently. After all, Naumkeag was truly a delightful place. She liked the simplicity and respectability writ-

ten on the faces before her. The little ambitions and jealousies and victories of these people appealed to her as at once precocious and charming. Wherever her duty to her daughter was to call her, she should always look back on this Arcadian environment with genuine affection. Perhaps even a tear might fall on the family plate with a crest and an H intertwined. . . .

At this point Mrs. Higgins's wandering thoughts were brought abruptly back. The waltz had come to an end, but there was an extraordinary flutter in the air. Mrs. Higgins swept the faces of the patronesses on each side of her. Their eyes were fixed on the group of young men about the door. She looked toward Miranda. The Boston representative of family plate and pedigree sat gazing at her like a man who has forgotten something and is hungry. Miranda appeared wholly oblivious of the young gentleman; there was a flush on her cheeks and her eyes were also riveted on the crowd about the door. Then the flutter increased perceptibly. A strange young man who limped slightly and bore on his left cheek a long scar had advanced on the arm of an usher and was bowing low before the patronesses.

The next instant Mrs. Higgins's eyes grew stony, and Miranda plunged hastily into conversation with the young gentleman of pedigree. For, after a moment's consultation in the centre of the hall, the usher and the young man made straight toward her, and the young man was making another excellent bow. Then Naumkeag society gasped a little in spite of itself, and Mrs. Higgins grew faint with mortification. For Miranda held out her hand in the most informal fashion in the world.

"I am very glad to meet you," she said, "because we are next-door neighbors."

The young man held the hand for an instant and bowed again. There was no doubt he bowed presentably.

"Not only next-door neighbors,"

he answered, "but we have met before, you know."

Miranda looked up wonderingly.

"Before?" said she. "Why, how dreadful! I don't remember at all. Was it in Naumkeag?"

The young man regarded her for a moment gravely.

"No—not in Naumkeag," he said—"and yet not so very long ago."

He showed embarrassment, and hesitated as if searching his memory for a face.

Miranda laughed.

"You have forgotten, too," she said, skeptically. "There is no use trying to remember, because you are mistaken."

"You are right," said the young man. "I was mistaken. It was not you at all. Have you ever," he continued irrelevantly, "seen the day break on the Eastern Sea?"

"Of course not," replied Miranda, decidedly. Then quickly she half-rose from her seat to make him a little curtsy, and immediately buried her nose in her bunch of roses. "Will you have a flower?" she asked.

The young gentleman of pedigree had departed, and Miranda made a place beside her. Three or four late-comers approached in turn to ask for a dance, or a part of a dance, then or thereafter, only to retire with Miranda's regrets that she was engaged ahead as far as she could count.

"They told me beforehand there was not the slightest hope," said the young man, "but there is still the pleasure of asking. May I have the honor of a waltz?"

"Which?" asked Miranda, with much innocence. "The second or the fifth?"

"Both," he said, stoutly.

"With pleasure," answered Miranda. She was deep in the arrangement of her bouquets. "How funny!" she said. "I saved out those dances for fear I should be tired, and didn't think of them again until the instant you asked me. But if you tell a soul I shall be disgraced."

It was, perhaps, a coincidence that Captain Duff should put Miranda and

her mother into their carriage at the end of the evening, while various covetous young gentlemen saw the office well discharged. When Miranda said good-night she gave him her hand through the carriage door and asked him not to take cold, for a heavy snow was falling and the young man's head was uncovered.

On the way home Mrs. Higgins, who had become immovable early in the evening and rigid toward the end, preserved a bolt-upright attitude of disapprobation that she felt spoke louder than words. After a short distance traversed in silence Miranda sighed pathetically, but not a muscle of Mrs. Higgins relaxed. Mrs. Higgins could be a Spartan mother on occasion. Miranda sighed again.

"I hope that young man will not take cold," said Miranda. "He is perfectly lovely."

Whereupon Mrs. Higgins promptly abandoned her policy of silence. If, an hour later, when Miranda crept into bed, she was unaware of the duty of a young lady to herself, her family, her position in the world, to things present and to come; if she had not definite ideas on such topics as Propriety, Dignity, Circumspection, the Eternal Fitness and Unfitness of Young Men, the blame could be laid to no lack of emphasis or directness in her mother's remarks.

VII

As Miranda was coming out of her front door the next morning Captain Duff was just descending his front steps. Miranda's face assumed an expression of severity, but when they had met on the sidewalk and in some unaccountable manner shaken hands, he was walking up the street beside her, inquiring politely concerning her and her mother's health after the late hours of the night before.

"I am going out to the toboggan club," said Miranda. "The tobogganing will be fine to-day. Have you seen our toboggan slide?"

"I have not," replied Captain Duff,

"but I should like to. Might a stranger stand somewhere in the snow and look on?"

"The idea!" said Miranda. "You will be very welcome, and I will lend you my toboggan."

For several blocks they talked of the party and the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne, the only topics in Naumkeag with which the young man was as yet provided. Finally they left Hazel street for the deeper snow of the turnpike.

"It is very kind of you to let me come," said the young man.

"Oh!" said Miranda, with dismay.

"Is the snow too deep for you?"

"No, but if you think it is kind to let you come you must go back. That would be too bad. Do you really think so?" Her face was full of concern. "I forgot to tell you," she continued, "that I have been instructed to be polite to you when we meet but not to encourage you to become better acquainted. You must promise, whatever happens, not to wish to become better acquainted."

He glanced swiftly at her and away.

"I am afraid it would be safer for me to go back at once."

"It might be safer," said Miranda, "but it would be horribly impolite for me to *think* of such a thing. Remember, I am to be polite to you."

"I will remember," said the young man; "polite but not kind. Can you?"

"The little house on the hill," said Miranda, "is the toboggan club."

When Miranda reached home to a late luncheon that afternoon, having parted from her neighbor at her front door, she hastened to inform her mother of the demands that common civility had made on her. Accidents, chance encounters, it was plain, were to be expected. Who could have foreseen that he would be on his front steps when Miranda came down hers? There was nothing difficult in that, however. One had only to be polite—polite and distant—as Miranda had been. Besides, the whole matter was exceedingly tiresome, since she

had little interest in it one way or another.

Mrs. Higgins was pleased with these sentiments as indicating both Miranda's sensible nature and her careful maternal training. On the following day, which was Sunday, she saw them put to a practical test. For Captain Duff, resplendent in silk hat and frock coat, appeared when St. Xantippe's was dismissed, cut out Miranda before Mrs. Higgins could get a gun to bear, and saw her home.

The following Tuesday Miranda ran across him down town, but the meeting being nothing more than a skirmish she did not deem it necessary to mention it at home. Thursday she encountered him again. The poor young man had never seen the East India museum; could Miss Higgins spare a few moments, as a matter of politeness? The few moments stretched to an hour apropos of a model of a Chinese junk and an original idea of Miranda's. The idea was that her politeness might be turned to practical account in the way of acquiring useful information.

"Tell me," she commanded, "something about the battles you were in against the Japanese. Were they very dreadful?"

Captain Duff laughed.

"There was only one real battle," he said, "but that was very dreadful—especially for the Chinese, because we were soundly thrashed."

Whereupon she required of him the whole story of that disastrous battle, with every particular of how his own ship went down.

"How awful!" she said at the end, "and how brave! How could they sink you when you were so brave?"

There were young gentlemen who would have given all they hoped to possess to see the light that shone in Miranda's eyes.

"There was little to choose in bravery," said Captain Duff, "between Japanese and Chinese. I saw a Japanese gunner with half of his head shot away step back and hand his lanyard to a comrade before he

tumbled over dead. And when they boarded the *Chih Yuen* the first man killed was a Japanese sailor who took a cutlass stroke intended for his officer and saluted as he went down."

Miranda shivered. She had never heard anything so appalling, so wondrous, so beautiful.

"When you come to fight men like that," said Captain Duff, "take care."

"I will," assented Miranda, hastily.

On Friday Miranda found him at the toboggan club. Having established a precedent, she felt obliged to offer him the use of her toboggan, which he accepted. Miranda was on the toboggan.

When Sunday came round again it appeared that Mrs. Higgins had made some plans of her own. After service Miranda came down the aisle under close convoy of her mother and Miss Augusta—Mrs. Higgins on the star-board, Miss Augusta to port. Whereupon Mrs. Higgins had the pleasure of seeing Captain Duff, after an inspection at long range, go about and disappear below the horizon.

Two weeks later Miss Augusta made a call on Mrs. Higgins. As an intimate friend, Miss Augusta wanted to know some things—some things that if Mrs. Higgins did not know it was just as well she should know why she did not know.

For instance: Why was it that Miranda was gaining a reputation in Naumkeag as a naval expert?

("My dear——!")

Wait a moment. Why is she generally credited with a knowledge of such matters as that a twelve-inch gun is not a gun twelve inches long?

("My dear, what do you mean?")

What can it profit a young girl scarcely out to have it rumored about her that she is conversant with dynamite torpedoes and trajectories, and can pronounce the name of the Chinese High-Admiral?

("My DEAR——!!!")

Why is a certain Boston young gentleman of pedigree an object of anxiety to his family and of commiseration to his friends? Why, in short,

is the most absorbing piece of gossip in Naumkeag the fact that one cannot stir abroad without running into a certain pair—none other than Miranda—Miranda of the house of Higgins—and—that—Captain—Duff?

Miss Augusta did not reach the bottom of the front steps before Mrs. Higgins appeared in Miranda's room. That night there was to be an Informal Party, and Miranda was sitting at her dressing-table with five bouquets before her. There were pink roses and white roses, and lilies-of-the-valley, and the customary florist's stock of violets. In her hand Miranda held three large Jacqueminots, which she alternately sniffed and rearranged. Of the other flowers she appeared somewhat oblivious; the considerable stock of violets stood pathetically on its head in one corner, and the card that had accompanied it lay on the floor.

"Miranda!" said Mrs. Higgins.

Miranda jumped and looked at her mother. Mrs. Higgins had a world of things to say, but she hesitated. There was a spot redder than usual in each of Miranda's cheeks, and in her eyes was something Mrs. Higgins had never seen there before and that made her feel queer. Somehow Mrs. Higgins felt a vague desire for delay.

"I see you have some more roses," she said. "Who sent them?"

"Er—Captain Duff," answered Miranda. "He says will I accept them for being the politest person he ever saw."

Mrs. Higgins sat down hastily.

"Isn't he a very impertinent young man," continued Miranda, "and stupid—not to know that mere politeness is not an invitation to send roses?"

Miranda looked at her mother with the appealing air of one who has been misunderstood. The red spots in her cheeks were redder than ever, and otherwise, from forehead to throat, her face was pink as a pink rose.

Mrs. Higgins went to Miranda's dressing-table and straightened the

violets with fingers that shook. Something told Mrs. Higgins that this was not the time for speech. It whispered also in her ear of certain observations to be made at the party that night—observations the mere thought of which made Mrs. Higgins feel ill. Miranda was still busy with the Jacqueminot roses; she did not appear vividly aware of her mother's presence.

VIII

It was plainly the voice of Truth that had whispered in Mrs. Higgins's ear. Matters for observation crowded on her from the time she and Miranda set foot in Winthrop Hall. Miranda was so long in the dressing-room that Mrs. Higgins left her and waited at the door. When she finally appeared, of her five bouquets she carried in her hand one Jacqueminot rose.

"Why," said Mrs. Higgins, "where are your flowers?"

Miranda caught her breath in dismay.

"Oh," said she, "I have forgotten them. What shall I do?"

"I suggest your going back into the dressing-room after them," said Mrs. Higgins. "I will wait for you here."

Miranda did not stir.

"Oh," she said, with a horrified air, "it is too dreadful!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Higgins, with impatience, "*what* is the matter with you?"

"They are not in the dressing-room," said Miranda. "They are at home on my dressing-table. I entirely forgot them."

Mrs. Higgins gazed at the rose in her daughter's hand for a moment with compressed lips. Then she raised her eyes to Miranda's face. As she did so the other two Jacqueminots dawned on her view. One nestled in the lace at Miranda's breast, the other was fastened in her hair.

"How mortifying," said Miranda, with a little frown, "that I should

forget those lovely flowers! Oh, there is Captain Duff."

This was only the beginning of Mrs. Higgins's observations. Before supper she saw Miranda dance a part of a dance with the young gentleman of pedigree from Boston and twice with Captain Duff. How Miranda found it possible to give two dances to Captain Duff when each of her other dances was divided among several claimants surpassed Mrs. Higgins's comprehension.

Captain Duff took Miranda to supper. He wore a large Jacqueminot rose in his buttonhole, and the rose that had been in Miranda's gown was missing. Mr. Bowdoin Bowdoin, 2d, —such was the name of the young gentleman of pedigree and family plate—took Mrs. Higgins to supper. While Mrs. Higgins ate he spoke to her of many things.

Mrs. Higgins was not a woman for delay. Miranda did not appear on the floor the first dance after supper, and Mr. Bowdoin Bowdoin, 2d, was sent after her post-haste. He found her in a corner of the deserted anteroom, propped round with silk pillows, with Captain Duff before her. He was leaning toward her, speaking. Miranda's head was bent so low that her face was hidden, but she seemed to answer occasionally in monosyllables. Then, of a sudden, she raised her eyes and let her companion look into them. Mr. Bowdoin Bowdoin, 2d, from where he stood at the door, also caught a fleeting glimpse into those eyes. He felt as if someone were squeezing his heart like a wet sponge. Miranda and her companion had not seen him at all. He went away softly, and expressed his regrets to Mrs. Higgins that Miranda was nowhere to be found. Which proves that pedigree and family plate are not all of the excellent things young gentlemen may inherit.

Mrs. Higgins was instantly on her feet, but at that moment Miranda appeared on Captain Duff's arm. Morning and evening stars were shining in Miranda's eyes. Mrs. Higgins was

going home, and her daughter's surprised and anxious inquiries received little reply. In the dressing-room and in the carriage Mrs. Higgins was granite and ice. Half-way home, Miranda, who had been drawing long breaths, suddenly threw herself into her mother's lap in a tempest of weeping.

"Repentance," said Mrs. Higgins to herself, grimly.

Half an hour later Mrs. Higgins, in dressing-gown and slippers, entered Miranda's room. Miranda sat moping her eyes with her pocket handkerchief. She had not so much as taken off her gloves.

"I am ready," said Mrs. Higgins, seating herself with severe dignity, "for an explanation."

Miranda rolled her handkerchief into an elaborate ball, with which she dabbed her eyes vehemently.

"I am waiting," repeated Mrs. Higgins.

"There is nothing to explain," said Miranda, "except that—he—he—said—that he—loves me."

Mrs. Higgins turned pale and opened her mouth rather wide.

"He—did not intend to—tell—me," continued Miranda, "but he said—he couldn't help it. Oh, he has been in love with me for a long time—long before he even knew there was such a person. He had wandered over South America—and Europe—and Asia—and the Philippine Islands, and never knew why—until—until—he saw me—then he said he knew—what he had been looking for—all the time."

Miranda blinked at her mother and wiped her nose tragically.

"Will you be so kind," asked Mrs. Higgins, "as to mention the name of this—tramp?"

Miranda regarded her mother bewilderedly, as if the idea that there were various young gentlemen in the world were quite novel. Then a little flush came into her face and she looked at the floor.

"Captain—Duff," she said, very softly.

The little clock on Miranda's mantel ticked off twice a dozen seconds. Mrs. Higgins gazed at her daughter. Miranda continued to look at the floor. It was as well that she did not see her mother's countenance.

"He is coming to-morrow to—to tell you," said Miranda. "Oh, he is very brave. He says he would rather face a submerged mine or—or a—a—automobile torpedo. But he is not in the least *afraid* to come——"

Then Mrs. Higgins spoke.

IX

AT half-past three the next afternoon Captain Duff called on Mrs. Higgins. Mrs. Higgins was not at home. The next afternoon he called again. Mrs. Higgins was indisposed. The afternoon following he called again. Mrs. Higgins was very much engaged and begged to be excused. Captain Duff's business was very particular; would not Mrs. Higgins be so kind as to send down word when she would be able to give him a few moments? Mrs. Higgins regretted that she must ask to be excused indefinitely.

After this a week passed. Miranda was not seen outside of the house except in her mother's company. There were dark rings under her eyes and a droop to her mouth that was heart-rending. The shutters on Miss Cad's house were once more closed and no sound came from within. The Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne disappeared from the world again, but this time it was well known that he was on a spiritual mission. Finally came the report that Mrs. Higgins and her daughter were about to take a trip abroad, *for a change of air*, and that Mr. Bowdoin Bowdoin, 2d, would join them in Paris. About the same time, it was said, Captain Duff was to depart for Cuba to fight for the insurgents. The young ladies of Naumkeag had never dreamt of anything so romantic or so sad. They would not have made an even trade for *Romeo and Juliet*. The sympathy of

maturer ladies in society went out, of course, to Mrs. Higgins.

On the day before Mrs. Higgins and Miranda were to start for New York Captain Duff made another call on Mrs. Higgins. His face was haggard and he held his shoulders very square. Across the card he presented at the door ran this legend:

Captain Duff, who leaves Naumkeag to-morrow, earnestly entreats a few moments' conversation with Mrs. Higgins.

While the maid carried this epitome of humility and hopelessness up stairs Captain Duff stepped into the parlor. In one corner sat Miranda. Her eyes were red and her hair was all sorts of ways over her forehead. She sprang up with a little cry, and Captain Duff took both her hands in his. Tears and smiles so mingled in Miranda's eyes it was a miracle there was no rainbow.

"I had given up all hope," said Captain Duff, looking into them.

The smiles fled suddenly and there was only an increasing mist of tears.

"There *is* no hope," said Miranda. "We are going away—to-morrow—abroad. It may be years before we come back again. I may never see you as long as we live. There is my mother coming down stairs. I wanted to tell you—" grief and love's smart and young despair choke one so—"to tell you—that—I shall never—marry——"

At this moment Mrs. Higgins entered the room.

"Good-bye——" said Miranda.

"Miranda!" said Mrs. Higgins.

"—forever," whispered Miranda.

"You will go to your room immediately!" said Mrs. Higgins.

She turned to Captain Duff. Captain Duff stood like a tin soldier.

"Madam——" he began.

"Allow me to show you to the door," said Mrs. Higgins. "Pray do me the favor not to force your way in again."

"Madam," said Captain Duff, "I assure you I am an honorable man."

"I have not the least doubt of it in the world," said Mrs. Higgins.

"At present, however, I am much occupied with other matters."

Mrs. Higgins went toward the front door.

"Madam," said Captain Duff, remaining stock still, "I love your daughter——"

"What impertinence!" interrupted Mrs. Higgins, pausing at the parlor door. "You will go at once."

"Mrs. Higgins, you must listen. You have a kind heart, for you are her mother——"

"This is intolerable," interrupted Mrs. Higgins. "Being so honorable a young man——" Mrs. Higgins smiled sweetly—"it will not be necessary to remind you that one can call on the——police."

There was a moment's pause, during which Mrs. Higgins continued to smile. Then Captain Duff bowed and went through the hall and out the front door without another word. He looked like a drowned man.

X

MRS. HIGGINS lay in bed, but she could not sleep. A smile hovered over her lips and a hundred rose-colored ideas trooped through her mind. How many mortals have dared to teach a new stitch to Fate? And had Mrs. Higgins not found the very yarn of Fate in a snarl? Had she not unraveled it and crocheted it in a pattern of her own?—a pattern so elegant, so complete, so firmly woven that Fate herself might attempt in vain to tamper with it?

Up to within half an hour Mrs. Higgins's meditations had been punctuated by the sobs that came through the open door from Miranda's room. In Mrs. Higgins's mind there still lingered pleasantly the spectacle of the white-faced young man who had stumbled out of her front door that afternoon. To-morrow that objectionable young man would be hastening into oblivion; to-morrow Mrs. Higgins and Miranda would be on their way to Southampton and Paris.

Expectation was a dazzle. To begin with, there was Mr. Bowdoin

Bowdoin, 2d, his devotion and his family plate. Still, Mrs. Higgins was not sure. She would have a look at the nobility and family plate of the Old World. Was it for naught that those importunate dreams of hers had grown in vividness and reality night after night until, for the past week, even in her waking hours, she could feel the very touch of silverware under her hand? Was it for naught that so many a noble crest had flashed like the Pleiades above the Higgins H? Mrs. Higgins smiled an indulgent smile. She would allow the future to answer. She had no desire to destroy the consecutiveness of time. . . .

Even now, as Mrs. Higgins closed her eyes, she could recall those precious pieces, their every curve and angle and festoon. . . . She could almost see them. . . . She *could* see them. . . . She could . . . touch them—teapots—goblets—cream pitchers—and—other—things. . . .

Mrs. Higgins opened her eyes wonderingly. Miranda was bathing her mother's temples and holding smelling-salts to her nostrils. Then, suddenly, Mrs. Higgins shuddered.

"Has it gone?" she whispered.

Miranda jumped and drew her nightgown closely about her.

"Has what gone?" she demanded.

"The—the—Miss Cad," said Mrs. Higgins. "She was standing by the gas jet."

Miranda squealed and climbed on the bed.

Mrs. Higgins sat up and gazed about shakily. The brightly burning gas seemed to revive her somewhat. She looked at the clock. It was a quarter to three.

"I think," she said, "I have been dreaming."

"You were screaming," said Miranda, "and when I came you had the bedclothes drawn up tight over your head."

Mrs. Higgins seemed lost in thought.

"It was very peculiar," she said, reflectively. "She was standing by the gas jet. I saw her as plainly as I

see you. Then she pointed at the wall. . . ."

Mrs. Higgins paused, her eyes fixed in a vacant stare. She stared so long that Miranda reached out a trembling hand and shook her by the shoulder. Mrs. Higgins came to herself with a start.

"Don't be silly," she said, and straightway got out of bed and put on her wrapper and slippers. Then she went over and tapped gently at the wall just below the gas jet. Her hands shook, but there was a glow in her eyes.

"Mamma," pleaded Miranda, "what are you going to do?"

Mrs. Higgins regarded her daughter somewhat blankly.

"I don't know what I am going to do," she said, and came over and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"My dear," said Mrs. Higgins, "listen to me. You know very well that every night for months past I have dreamed of one thing—family plate. Sometimes with a crest, sometimes with only an H, sometimes with a crest and an H intertwined. Very well. For the last half-dozen nights those dreams have been more vivid, more real than ever before. To-night I dreamed the same dream again. There was a whole set of silver, and on each piece a crest and an H. And then, all of a sudden, this—this—Miss Cad was standing by the gas jet. . . ."

"Ugh!" shuddered Miranda.

"She stood there and began to make a noise, a sort of wailing noise, and I thought she was going to speak, but—she didn't speak—at first—she—she laughed. . . ."

"Ah-h-h-h," gasped Miranda.

"It was a very peculiar laugh. She opened her mouth several times, as if about to say something, but every time she—choked and—shook. And then, all at once, she did speak. She pointed at the wall over there, just below the gas jet, and said, 'Dig—dig—dig.' And the next thing I knew you were here."

Mrs. Higgins patted her forehead with her handkerchief.

"It was a very funny dream," said Miranda, tremulously.

"Miranda," said Mrs. Higgins, in a solemn voice, "I have felt positive those dreams meant something—only I supposed it was something abroad."

"I don't know what *you* mean," said Miranda.

"I mean this," said Mrs. Higgins. "To-night—the last night we are to be here—the dream changes. The family plate is the same, the crest is the same, but Miss Cad comes and points at the wall—at a *certain place in the wall*. . . . Well——"

"Well?" said Miranda, staring.

"Well," continued Mrs. Higgins, "Miss Cad knew this house for seventy years—and Miss Cad knew me."

Mrs. Higgins got resolutely on her feet, and going over to the fireplace seized the shovel.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Miranda, white as a sheet.

"I am going to see," replied Mrs. Higgins, "whether there is anything hidden in that wall."

"Mamma," implored Miranda, "what are you thinking of? It was nothing but a dream, and nobody believes in dreams. *Please* come to bed."

"This was not a dream," said Mrs. Higgins, approaching the gas jet. "It was *dreams*, and very extraordinary dreams. My dear, it is out of the question for me to leave this house to-morrow with the feeling that there may be a lot of family plate buried in my own bedroom wall. Perhaps the whole thing is simply absurd, but it will be a very simple matter to find out."

Mrs. Higgins turned and applied herself to the wall with a grim determination. The coal shovel, however, did not prove effective. Her efforts scarcely defaced the wall-paper. Vigorous blows were out of the question, for fear of arousing the household.

"Miranda," said Mrs. Higgins, "I want you to take the poker and come here."

"Mamma," moaned Miranda, "*please* wait till morning. It is too cold, and I am afraid. Something dreadful will happen."

Mrs. Higgins did not reply. Miranda was too evidently forgetting that dreadful things lost courage when they tried to happen to Mrs. Higgins.

"Besides," continued Miranda, "it would not be your silver. You would not have inherited it."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Higgins, without pausing; "will you be so kind as to inform me whose silver it would be? And if I have family plate on my table, will you tell me just who is to say whether I have inherited it or not?"

Miranda got up, and putting on her wrapper and slippers, joined her mother with the poker. Mrs. Higgins shut her teeth and gouged. A little hole began to show in the plaster and grow. Finally a large cake of plaster fell away.

"There," said Miranda, with a great sigh of relief, "nothing but a brick wall."

"Exactly," replied Mrs. Higgins. "If the wall is a thin one we shall very soon see what is inside of it."

Mrs. Higgins took a nail-file from her dressing-table and attacked the mortar between the bricks. Miranda, at her mother's direction, followed suit with a button-hook and the air of expecting to be interrupted shortly by the destruction of the world. The mortar proved too hard for such delicate implements, but there was a stand of arms hanging just outside the door. Mrs. Higgins got a pike-head, which she gave to Miranda, and took a short battle-axe herself.

A few minutes later there was an excavation between two bricks sufficient for the point of the poker, but all the prying they were capable of failed to move a brick. Then followed a long siege of scraping, digging and prying. Their hands were scratched and sore, and Mrs. Higgins's bedroom resembled the ruins of a miniature Pompeii.

At last, just as four o'clock was striking, a brick loosened and tumbled out on the floor. After that there was little trouble. Another brick loosened, then half a dozen more. They lifted them out carefully.

Suddenly Miranda shrieked softly and pointed her finger. The last thrust of the pike-head had revealed a black hole on the further side of the wall.

XI

CAPTAIN DUFF and the Rev. Algeron Maynadier Browne sat in the second-story front room of Miss Cad's house in the early hours of morning. Captain Duff sat stiffly with fixed jaw and lustreless eyes. The Rev. Algeron Maynadier Browne was beside him, his hand on his knee, speaking in a low voice. A half-filled trunk stood in the centre of the room and all sorts of articles littered the tables and chairs. With few changes the scene might have served as a model for one of those pictures that represent the last hours of the condemned.

After a while Captain Duff got up and proceeded with the packing of the trunk. He worked with the swiftness and precision of an adept. In a short time the tables and chairs were cleared and he entered the closet at one side of the room. For a few moments he could be heard fumbling round. Then, suddenly, he came out, closed the closet door softly behind him, turned down the gas, and going to a table drawer, took out a brace of revolvers. The Rev. Mr. Browne was at his side in a moment, and Captain Duff spoke to him shortly in an undertone.

"You will do nothing reckless," said the Rev. Mr. Browne, taking up his hat.

"Have no fear," replied Captain Duff. "Two men in front of the house and two behind, and the sergeant on the front steps."

The Rev. Mr. Browne hastened out quietly. Captain Duff examined the charges of his revolvers, and reopening the closet door, tiptoed within.

XII

"Put your hand through," said Mrs. Higgins, "and see if you can feel anything."

Miranda backed away.

"Ugh!" she said; "I couldn't!"

Mrs. Higgins stood her battle-axe against the wall, got down on her knees and inserted her whole arm. Immediately she brought out a small silver bowl and handed it to Miranda. Another, exactly like it, followed; then four curiously shaped goblets, very heavy and beautifully carved. Miranda could scarcely take the things from her mother for trembling. Mrs. Higgins was apoplectic.

"Well," said she, "what have you to say now? Look; is there anything on them?"

Miranda took up the articles one after the other and scanned them closely.

"There is something engraved," she said, "but I can't make it out. It seems to be in a foreign language."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Higgins. "Let me see one of them."

But Mrs. Higgins examined the inscription in vain.

"It does not seem to be exactly like the dream," she said. "Let them be for the present. They will be plainer by daylight."

She put her arm through the hole again and struggled in the darkness beyond.

"There's something too large to get through," she gasped. "We must enlarge the hole."

"Mother dear, *don't*," pleaded Miranda. "It is too much like a haunted cave. Something dreadful will happen."

Mrs. Higgins pried away more bricks, until the hole was nearly two feet in diameter, then reached through and brought out a great silver bowl, something like a punch bowl, but overlaid with wonderful *repoussé*, and so heavy she could hardly lift it.

"There's more," said Mrs. Higgins, in an ecstasy, plunging in again. "I can feel something—it—"

Mrs. Higgins shrieked and struggled from her knees toward the bed. Miranda screamed and retreated to the sofa and continued to scream. There was a dreadful noise on the other side of the hole. Several bricks tumbled out on the floor, and imme-

diately from the outer darkness the figure of a man in a red smoking-jacket, with a revolver in each hand, plunged headlong.

"Stephen!" cried Miranda, and fled into her room.

"I—beg—pardon," said Captain Duff, and stood transfixed.

Mrs. Higgins, on the bed, became consecutively an incarnation of horror, alarm, amazement, indignation. Then she became herself again.

"Oh!" she cried. "Indeed! Burglary! Sir, do not attempt to intimidate me with those pistols. We shall see," making toward the servants' bell, "whether there are States' prisons."

Captain Duff placed himself mechanically between Mrs. Higgins and the bell.

"Will you allow me one word?" he asked.

"Not a word," returned Mrs. Higgins, promptly.

"You have mentioned burglary. Will you tell me how you come to be in possession of my silver?"

"*Your silver!*" exploded Mrs. Higgins. "Do you dare! Young man, I dug that silver from my own bedroom wall."

A light broke in Captain Duff's face.

"Ah," he said, "*through* your wall, *out of* my closet. A Chinese silver service, as you may have observed. It was given me three years ago by the late Admiral Ting Ju Chang."

"What?" asked Mrs. Higgins, sitting down and turning chalk white.

"Madam," said Captain Duff, sadly, "no one could regret this more than myself."

"It is of course possible," said Mrs. Higgins, "that there is a misunderstanding. I dreamed there was silver hidden in the wall, and quite naturally dug it out. Since you say it is yours you may take it and retire."

She waved her hand with a dignified motion. There was perchance a quaver.

"Must I indeed explain?" asked Captain Duff. "The—police—are—below."

"Sir!" demanded Mrs. Higgins, "do you dare to insinuate——?"

"Oh, madam!" said Captain Duff. "Having been sent from headquarters with orders to make a thorough investigation, the sergeant in charge insists on viewing the premises. It will simply be necessary for Mrs. Higgins to tell the story of her dream—to the—proper authorities."

A hideous nausea came over Mrs. Higgins. Mrs. Higgins relating dreams to the *proper authorities!*—with a Chinese silver service, acquired from a neighbor's closet, to refresh her memory! Mrs. Isaac Newton Higgins, who had been going over to have a look at the nobility of Europe; who was to have been met by Mr. Bowdoin Bowdoin, 2d, in Paris; formerly a caryatid of Naumkeag society! Naumkeag society! Mrs. Higgins could feel the ravens picking her bones.

She walked over to Captain Duff and laid her hand on his arm.

"This is very—unfortunate," she said, "and—absurd, but it can, of course, be explained—and arranged—quietly. I may have been somewhat hasty toward you in the past, but—you are a gentleman. You will not permit such a—an annoyance to come on a family of such position as mine. You will find a suitable explanation for those creatures and see that they are dismissed at once."

Captain Duff gazed at Mrs. Higgins for a moment, then through and beyond her, like a man who has suddenly come on a mirage.

"There is one way——" he said, slowly.

"Of course," said Mrs. Higgins, with a wan smile.

"—with your consent."

"Mr. Duff," demanded Mrs. Higgins, "is this the time for formality? I beg you will get rid of those creatures at once."

Captain Duff went swiftly to the hole in the wall and called softly. A voice answered which sent a chill down Mrs. Higgins's spine—the voice of the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne. Captain Duff put his head through and spoke briefly. Mrs.

Higgins could not hear what he said, but there were immediately hasty footsteps, followed by the shutting of a door.

"What have you done?" cried Mrs. Higgins, the perspiration coming out on her forehead.

"Believe me," said Captain Duff, "there is not a moment to be lost."

"Tell me——"

"I hesitate——"

"Speak!" cried Mrs. Higgins.

"It is perfectly proper," said Captain Duff, "that there should be a newly begun passageway from the house of a mother-in-law to that of her son-in-law. It is perfectly natural that, being alarmed during the night, she should take a silver service from her son-in-law's closet into her own room for safe keeping—that her son-in-law, alarmed in turn, should send too hastily for the police. A somewhat unusual incident, but—strictly a family affair—that is, if she is a mother-in-law."

"I think I do not quite understand," said Mrs. Higgins. "I am *not* a mother-in-law."

"Madam," said Captain Duff, "I love your daughter."

Mrs. Higgins turned purple.

"Quite enough," she commanded. "The matter is at last quite plain. An impudent trick! Miserable young man——"

Captain Duff went to the window, and putting aside the curtain beckoned Mrs. Higgins to look out. Two policemen, in the glare of the electric light, were gazing up expectantly.

"Two more are behind the house," said Captain Duff, "and the sergeant is on the front steps."

Mrs. Higgins returned mutely to the edge of the bed.

"Madam," said Captain Duff, gently, "there is no trick."

"We are going abroad to-morrow," said Mrs. Higgins. "On our return, if you wish to call——"

"I am grateful," said Captain Duff, earnestly, "but I fear the gentlemen below would never wait so long."

Mrs. Higgins clutched the bed-clothes and rocked to and fro.

"Ah," said Captain Duff, continu-

ing to look out, "they are crossing the street."

"I can see," said Mrs. Higgins, "that I may have been unjust. For the present—our trip abroad—shall be—postponed. To-morrow, I—and—my daughter—will be at home. If—in time—"

"From here to the city clerk's house, by bicycle," said Captain Duff, taking out his watch, "is two minutes. Two minutes more to get the city clerk out of bed, four to write the license, two to return. Our messenger has already been gone nine and one-half minutes. In thirty seconds, therefore, we may expect him."

"Messenger!" exclaimed Mrs. Higgins. "License! Will you be so good as to enlighten me?"

Captain Duff bowed gravely.

"Appreciating the danger of delay," he said, "I took the liberty of sending, immediately on obtaining your consent, for a license—a—marriage license."

Mrs. Higgins rose to her feet and immediately sat down again.

"My consent! You—have—dared! You have the impudence—to hope—that this—infamy—will be successful! Very well, sir! We shall see! Will you leave this room instantly or shall I ring for assistance?"

"It will not be necessary to ring," said Captain Duff, retiring toward the hole in the wall. "It was only by the promise of a satisfactory explanation that the sergeant has been induced to wait so long."

"One moment," cried Mrs. Higgins, hastily.

Mrs. Higgins shut her eyes. The *proper authorities*—Naumkeag society, babbling, gabbling, jabbering—in short, the deep sea; she opened her eyes, and there, before her, was the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne.

"We are very fortunate," said Captain Duff. "Mr. Browne has just returned—with the license. I have taken the liberty of explaining your wishes to him in full, and he has consented that there shall be no delay."

The Rev. Mr. Browne approached and seemed to speak appropriately,

but Mrs. Higgins gazed before her as one in a sleep, and heard not.

Captain Duff had crossed the room and knocked at Miranda's door. It opened in a flash. Miranda, with tumbled hair and flaming cheeks, but dressed from top to toe, confronted him. She could not have been far.

"Oh," cried Miranda, "do you think I would marry you in such a fashion?"

He leaned toward her and spoke very fast and very low. The next instant she was past him and had her head in her mother's lap.

"My child," murmured Mrs. Higgins.

A touch on her hand; he had raised her to her feet . . . and led her forward. . . .

"Dearly beloved—" said the Rev. Algernon Maynadier Browne.

Mrs. Higgins rose and stood at her daughter's left hand unsteadily. Strange sights and sounds filled her mind. She heard again the weird merriment of that apparition in her dream, choking, convulsed, and—was there a note that Mrs. Higgins had not perceived before?—a mocking note? *mocking?* Mrs. Higgins saw for a moment the goodly stretch of Beacon street, the family trees; Paris, and Mr. Bowdoin Bowdoin, 2d, waiting, waiting; crests and coats-of-arms, pedigrees and family plate, illusive, dream-like. Then the Chinese silver service glared indelicately in the gaslight.

"Dearly beloved—"

Up and down, the length of Hazel street, Naumkeag society lay in the heavy sleep of early morning. But no fear it will not awaken. Already the lights in Mrs. Higgins's chamber paled, and from Naumkeag Willows and Marblehead the dawn leaned out like a princess from a tower.

Oh, shame! From Miranda's eyes tears popped forth, trembled on her lashes, rolled down her cheeks. And straight from Miranda's heart there rose a sigh, as if someone had opened the gates of Paradise a little way and a breath had blown out.

For Miranda was a foolish, sentimental young thing.

THE MIRTHLESS PRINCESS

(A GRIMM TALE MADE GAY)

By Guy Wetmore Carryl

IN days of old the King of Saxe
Had singular opinions,
For with a weighty battle-axe
He brutalized his minions.
But what aroused within his breast
A rage well-nigh primeval
Was most of all his daughter, dressed
In fashion medieval.

In all her life she'd never smiled;
Her sadness was abysmal.
The boisterous monarch found the child
Unutterably dismal.
He therefore said the prince who made
Her laughter from the shell come,
Besides in ducats being paid,
Might wed the girl, and welcome!

The king's announcement quickly drew
Nine princes in a column,
But all in vain; the princess grew,
If anything, more solemn.
One read her "Innocents Abroad,"
The next wore clothes eccentric;
The third one swallowed half his sword,
As in the circus tent trick.

Thus eight of them into her cool
Reserve but deeper shoved her.
There was but one authentic fool,
The prince who really loved her!
He'd alternate between the height
Of hope and deep abasement;
He caught distressing colds at night
By watching 'neath her casement.

He said the bitter things of love
All lovers, save a few, say,
And learned by heart the verses of
Swinburne and A. de Musset;
And did what I have done, I know,
And you, I do not doubt it;
Instead of bottling up his woe,
He bored his friends about it!

THE SMART SET

This attitude his wished-for bride
 To silent laughter goaded,
 Until he talked of suicide,
 And then the girl exploded.
 "You make me laugh, and so," she said,
 "I'll marry you next season."
 (Not many people who are wed
 Have half so good a reason!)

MORAL: The lover's like the owl,
 Comic, because so grave a fowl.
 The owl appears to give the cue:
 We learn from him, to wit, to woo!



WITH THE COFFEE AND CIGARETTES

A WOMAN'S woman is only raw material. A man's woman is the cultivated variety.
 You'll notice a girl never screams at the second kiss.
 If hammocks could talk ears would grow on trees.
 It is bad form for a woman to laugh at her husband's jokes. Besides, she has heard them before.
 Silk stockings cover a multitude of shins.
 There's a divinity that shapes the ends of every girl with pretty feet.
 The prodigal son comes home in a cab nowadays, and charges it up to the family.
 The father of liars took the first cold bath.
 A kiss through a veil is like a cherry without a cocktail.
 The girl who tells you she knows how to steer the automobile knows a good deal more than that.
 Look out for the man with a dimple in his chin, if you are a girl. He may get away.
 Eve discovered the first garter snake.
 A cigarette is the cheroot of all evil.
 Few people make love at breakfast.
 "The Love Letters of a Liar" should have been called "The Love Letters of a Man." Simplicity is the finest literary style.

DOUGLAS DUNNE.



THE FAVORITE PLACE

MRS. DORCAS—While in the country I suppose you were engaged most of the time in boating?
 MISS DORCAS—Oh, no, ma. It was while I was in the hammock that I became engaged the most times.

IN THE MATTER OF A WATCHMAN

By Guy Somerville

. . . but he, being enamored withal of another damosel, is fain to resist all her importunity. Finally he yieldeth. —*Il Decamerone di Giovanni Chinone.*

“I WONDER,” said Mona, reflectively, “why men *always* want to do those things.”

Mona sat on one end of the sofa and I sat on the chair opposite. This I must say in justice to Me.

“Do they always?” I queried.

“There never was an exception,” said Mona, positively.

“I have known some men,” I ventured, “who *never*——”

Mona shrugged her pretty, white shoulders.

“They couldn’t,” said she. “They couldn’t—or they did not dare.”

I carefully avoided Mona’s eyes.

“But they always wanted to,” said she.

“Perhaps they did,” I assented.

“In nine cases out of ten,” Mona went on, “it was because they did not dare.”

I continued to avoid the eyes.

“Which is foolish,” pursued Mona.

“It’s awfully warm,” I protested.

“Besides, they may merely be being true to another girl.”

“I don’t really believe,” said Mona, fetchingly, “that men are ever thoroughly true to another girl.”

“But they are to you?” I suggested, brightly.

Mona extinguished the nearest lamp.

“We shall not need it after your last,” she said, smiling.

I grew very uncomfortable. I am not used to girls. And Mona is ultra.

“We were speaking,” said she, “of other girls.”

“And thinking,” I rejoined, “of you.”

Mona smoothed her hair.

“Am I different?” said she.

“You do not even resemble,” said I.

“You’re a nice boy,” said Mona.

“I must be going now,” I ventured.

“You are the only man,” said Mona, “whom I can make behave.” I felt ruffled.

“I don’t see——” I began.

“Oh, the others all have to be taught. But you—you are natural.”

“But the others must behave—in the end,” I said.

“Oh, yes,” said Mona, hastily. “But it is so hard to teach them. That is why you provoke me so.”

I puzzled over this.

“I can see that now,” I said, finally.

“Exactly,” said she. “You see, it is such fun to teach. And they take it—many of them—so hard.”

“Yes,” said I. “I remember taking it hard once—from another girl.”

“Be careful of that chair—it’s going to break,” said Mona, making room on the sofa.

I took another chair.

“Mr. Armitage,” said Mona, suddenly.

“Miss Wheelock?”

“Were you ever in love?”

I reflected.

“Is that when you have a headache, a sore throat and a rash?”

“I don’t know about the sore throat,” said Mona. “But you always have a headache, and always are rash.”

"I had it once," I said, satisfied.
Mona left the sofa and stood beside my chair. I dared not rise.

"At that time," said Mona, "didn't you want to——?"

"At that time," I said, solemnly, "I did."

Mona twirled the matrix that she wore on her second finger.

"Did she let you?" said she.

"She had nothing whatever to say about it," said I.

Mona cried out, triumphantly:

"That's just the trouble! She should have made you mind. She did not, and the result is that now——"

"That now——?"

"You are no fun," she finished, "for any of us other girls."

"Oh," said I.

"Because you sit there and think that if you wanted to you could do anything you please."

"I don't," I said, horrified.

"But you can't," said Mona, earnestly.

"I never said I could," I pleaded.

"You did," said Mona, tranquilly; "you said just that."

There could be no question that Mona loved me.

"Did you ever smoke?" I asked, irreverently.

Mona blushed a little angrily.

"A cigarette—once or twice—just to see."

"Never a cigar?"

"Of course not!" indignantly.

I pointed to a long cigar on the rug almost at her feet.

"Whose is that?" said I.

Mona looked uncomfortable.

"That is—a man's," she said. "He was here before you came."

"He is still here," said I.

"Why, how did you know?" said Mona, opening her eyes very wide.

"Because his coat is on the hall table, and a hat that is too small for your father and too big for your brother."

"It's simple, after all," she said, breathing easily again.

"I don't know," I said, somewhat puzzled, "that it is so simple."

"Why not?"

"The place where we found the cigar——"

"Yes?"

"Is that where——?"

Mona smiled mischievously.

"Foolish! No, that isn't where."

"How did it get there?" I queried.

"It fell, I suppose," said she.

"When he was standing up?" said I, incredulous.

"Just as likely," said Mona, "as if he had been sitting down."

"But," said I, "he might have been bending."

Mona drew herself up.

"My dear Mr. Armitage!" said Mona.

"Where is he now?" said I.

"When you came," said Mona, "he said he would go up and talk for a while with father. Because, you see," she added, negligently, "if he had stayed here he should have had to go first."

"Oh," said I. "Whereas——"

"Certainly," said Mona. "Whereas."

"Who is this man?" said I.

Mona pursed up her lips. Which is very dangerous.

"You aren't fit to know," said Mona.

"You won't tell?" said I.

She shook a pretty head.

"Then," said I, decisively, "I don't believe there *is* any man."

A shrug of fair shoulders.

"I don't care," said Mona. "You needn't believe."

"Of course," said I, "if there is no other man, I don't have to go first."

"His name," said Mona, "is Charley Masterson."

"Much obliged," said I, rising. "I believe he's in love with my sister."

"It isn't anything in the world to me," said Mona, "if he is."

I drew on my coat and laid my hand on the front door. Mona was wholly charming.

"Are you going?" said she.

"You are deucedly good-looking," I said, reluctantly.

"Do you still feel," said she, "that you ought to be true to the other girls?"

"It isn't plural," I pleaded.

"Then it is very singular," said Mona.

I walked waveringly out on the stoop.

"Aren't you going to lose your pin?" said Mona.

I sighed. It was a pretty pin.

"I'm afraid I am," said I.

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Mona. "It is *dear*."

"It was eighteen fifty," I admitted, off my guard.

Mona frowned.

"You should never," she said, reprovingly, "you should never, *never* tell the values."

"I don't," I said. "That was the price. Nobody knows the value, except the jeweler."

"I always did like curly hair," said Mona, irrelevantly.

"What a perfect night!" said I.

"I wonder if the watchman is looking?" said Mona.

I started violently and almost fell down the stoop.

"Let's go in again," I suggested, weakly.

"On account of the watchman?" said Mona, innocently.

"I can't help it if I have," I said, in desperation.

"What would she think?" whispered Mona, diabolically.

"You will never tell?" I said, with much fear.

"The watchman—" began Mona.

"The watchman *non est*," I interrupted.

"What language do you speak best?" said Mona, admiringly.

"The universal language."

"Volapük?"

"No—this kind."

"Dear me," she whispered, "what a good accent! Don't go."

"I must," I said, hurriedly.

Mona raised her eyebrows.

"There—you have again!" said she.

"I don't care," said I.

"Good-night," said Mona.

I stood on the bottom step till she closed the door. Well? . . . She was beautiful and clever and very rich, and she certainly loved me. And I wasn't really engaged.

I drew a silver dollar from my pocket and twirled it absently. It is good to be a bachelor, and to digest one's food, and to sleep soundly o' nights and take the water as it comes in the morning. But if it was necessary to be anybody's in particular, why not Mona's?

The silver dollar slipped from my hand and rolled lightly into the area and under the iron door. On such haps do the destinies of men and nations hang.

I went into the area and reached under the iron door. As I did so the front door, above me at the top of the stoop, opened. And there came forth a youth and a maiden.

"Has he gone?" said the youth—and it was not Charley Masterson.

"Yes, at last," said Mona.

A horrible suspicion seized me that they were talking of me.

"He stayed the devil of a time," said the youth.

"It was awfully hard to make him go. I did everything," said Mona, helplessly.

Decidedly they were talking of me. If so I ought not to listen.

"What do you and he talk about?" said the youth. "I mean, when you're alone."

"Oh, we talk art," said Mona, vaguely.

I really would not listen any longer.

"When we are married," said the youth, positively, "I won't have him about the house. I know him."

"The pup!" I ejaculated, silently. It might be my duty to listen, if only for the purpose of making sure that he did not deceive Mona.

"Don't be cross, dear," said Mona.

I felt ruefully for my scarf pin.

"He tried to kiss me," said Mona.

There really did not seem to be any further point in listening.

"He shall answer for it to me," said the youth.

If he only would ask!

"I wonder if the watchman is looking?" said Mona.

And then I leaned for support against the area door. I am leaning against it still.

AUGUST TWILIGHT

AT eventide the dusky murmurs fall—
 Oh, the honey of the kisses of thy mouth!
 At eventide the ships beyond the wall
 Go slipping to their harbor in the South.

The drowsy bee his evening vesper hums,
 The frog begins to croak his night alarms,
 The cricket in the sleepy meadow strums—
 Oh, the sweetness of the clinging of thine arms!

Oh, the wonder of the beauty of thine eyes!
 Oh, the splendor of thy youthful strength and grace!
 Oh, the glory of the love that never dies!
 Oh, the tenderness that glorifies thy face!

At eventide the eyes of heaven shine,
 And o'er them flit the clouds in trailing veils;
 The little buds go nodding on the vine
 That over Lethe spreads its leafy sails.

Each little bird is dreaming in his nest,
 Nor in our dreams are thou and I apart;
 In all this world of sleep there is no rest
 For the longing for the beating of thy heart.

VENEVILL BRAY.



RATIONAL REVENGE

JUDGE—Why did you sell this old countryman a gold brick?
 BUNCO STEERER—I boarded at his place all Summer, your honor, and it
 was the only chance I had to get square with him.



AT BAILEY'S BEACH

THE ugly duckling is most in the swim.
 Those who go into the water most boldly have the least sand.
 The "warmer" the costume, the less it protects from Father Neptune's
 chilly embraces.
 The older the girl, the more anxious she is to be taught how to float.
 While there are many good fish in the sea there are more on shore.
 There is always a roar when the swells go broke.

G. L. H.

THE SUNFLOWER GIRL

By Justus Miles Forman

LIVINGSTONE came on board almost at the last moment, and so had no chance to cast an eye over his fellow passengers as they embarked. He had been staying with the Leith-Holdens down in Chester, and had come up on an afternoon train that left him barely time to drive to the landing stage.

He saw his luggage into the hold, and then followed his steamer box and suit case to room 103. Room 103 was nearly full of a huge Englishman, red as to face and yellow as to hair, who flourished in one hand a bath sponge the size of a football and in the other a suit of appalling pink pajamas. "Thank the Lord he isn't French or German!" breathed Mr. Livingstone, gratefully, and proceeded to stow away his effects.

He inquired as to what hour of the morning the Englishman meant to tub, fixed his own time a half-hour later, changed his hat for a cap of shrieking plaids, and went on deck.

His roommate followed in a moment, and they stood leaning over the rail and gazing down into the liquid mud of the Mersey.

"Who was responsible," asked Livingstone, "for that charming paraphrase, 'The quality of Mersey is not strained?'"

The Englishman laughed. "Don't know. Fancy it's about as old among the Liverpool people as the shipping itself. Not bad, either."

It was already growing dusk as they floated down the river, and a bugle from the companionway amidships tootled cheerfully "The Roast Beef of Old England."

As Livingstone squeezed into his revolving chair at the table he became conscious of a most wonderful mass of very smartly coiffed hair at his left, shining, silken, wavy black, with unexpected bits of red here and there, in the high lights.

The head turned, and there were equally wonderful eyes, big, rather too big, and gray, and there were dark shadows under them, as is often the case among brunettes of a certain type.

"Oh, I don't know," smiled the young gentleman, exultantly. "I think I'm glad I came. Why, hang it, she's a beauty! She's a picture!"

Then he cast about for something to make an excuse for talk.

"She doesn't want salt," he said, "or pepper, and she's got an indecent amount of pickle already. If she'd only drop something I might pick it up, and she'd have to thank me."

Finally he settled on the flower. The girl had not changed her black traveling clothes, and wore, pinned to the front of her jacket, a small sunflower.

"Your sunflower," said Livingstone, "makes me hesitate to believe that I've really left England. I have been living for three weeks in a sort of jungle of sunflowers, for which some friends of mine down in Chester have developed a sudden and violent passion, and with which they have completely hidden their house and garden."

The girl lifted the drooping head of the flower with very nice, long, slim fingers, and laughed.

"This has come from farther than Chester," she said. "It was grow-

ing only yesterday morning in a dear old *jardin bosquet* in Quimper. It's all I have left of Quimper, and I think I'm going to cry right here."

"Why, then it isn't a sunflower," declared the man. "It's a *tourne-sol*, and that's much nicer. I used to be fond of Quimper and all that coast. Please," he demanded, gravely, "will you give me your *tourne-sol* when it is dead? I should like to press it in the back of my watch for the sake of Quimper."

The girl laughed. "If you will promise to do that I will give it to you without fail," she agreed. "Won't you show me your watch? It must be such a nice, large, comfortable watch."

"It is a comfortable watch," he said. "It's not one of those aggressively prompt and accurate watches that are always giving you incipient heart disease by reminding you that you are late for something important. My watch may have infirmities, but I love its infirmities. We are so much alike."

The girl looked at him with amusement and with a glint of interest in the big gray eyes.

"It must be very pleasant," she smiled, "to have a watch so sympathetic and feeling as that. It is certainly well trained. Is—is your conscience equally considerate?"

"More so," said Livingstone, firmly. "It has been with me longer than the watch, and there is nothing it would not do for me—nothing."

The girl laughed.

The large woman with beetling brows who sat across the table from Mr. Livingstone gave a little gasp and pressed a startled hand to the front of her bodice.

"There was a distinct motion," she said, truculently, to the table at large. "I felt it plainly. If it continues I shall be exceedingly ill," and she fixed a baleful eye on Mr. Livingstone, as if she suspected him of maliciously rolling the ship.

There was the faintest possible uplift as the ship's nose met the swell at the mouth of the river, the slight-

est possible heave, the breathing of a giant asleep.

The large person across the table added another hand to the front of her bodice.

"There!" she said, in a husky roar, and lowered malevolently at the fascinated Livingstone. That young gentleman met the delighted eyes of the Sunflower Girl and turned pink.

"I think I'll go on deck," he said, hastily; "I want to smell the sea. We're out of the river now." And he fled to his stateroom.

"Curse that old dragon!" he complained, in an indignant growl. "She quite turned my appetite with that eye of hers. None o' my fault if the tub pitches a bit."

He put on a heavy white sweater and a yachting jacket, and filled a pipe. Then he went up on deck.

It was a clear, fresh night, keen with the salt, delicious coolness of the North Atlantic in Summer. Livingstone hung over the rail and watched the white uplift of the water at the vessel's quarter. The wind beat against his face, clean, chill, blood-stirring, till he gasped for breath.

"Jove, that's something like!" he cried, as he turned to watch the deck. Then someone spoke beside him.

"Isn't it glorious?" said the girl.

Livingstone swung about toward her.

She had tied a veil about her hair so that it should not loosen in the wind. She wore no hat, but a long gray ulster that fell from her chin to the deck in straight lines, and she had turned the collar up about her neck. She looked extremely well.

"I *am* glad I came!" said Mr. Livingstone, with fervor.

He did not realize that he was speaking aloud. There was a little smothered sound from the girl. It might have been a laugh.

"The night hides your gorgeous eyes," he said—inwardly this time. "They're just two great black shadows. One feels what is there, though. And your nose is perfect. I approve of its evident desire to turn up a bit.

It ought to turn up—a bit. And that ridiculous little curled upper lip that overhangs the lower one!—why, you've a Rossetti mouth, a perfect Rossetti mouth! If it weren't for your square jaw—and I like that, too—you would be the Blessed Damozel—no, I think the Donna della Finestra—all over again! You're really much nicer than either of those ladies, though," he concluded. "Perhaps you aren't so poetic, but you'd be a lot more fun," he decided, somewhat vaguely.

"I asked you a question," said the girl; "I asked you if it isn't glorious. You are not polite."

"I was considering," he retorted, "just how glorious it is. I should like to tell you, but you see I've a working knowledge of only three or four languages. Besides," he added, inwardly, "you mightn't like it." And aloud: "But since that is beyond me, shall we walk? It's the proper thing to do, on shipboard, after dinner—or after breakfast or luncheon, or any other time."

The girl laughed. "Yes, we must walk," she agreed; "but before we do that I've got to wish on the first star. I saw the tip of the Great Bear's tail when I came on deck, so it shall be that one."

Then she repeated, very solemnly, three times that classic little rhyme:

"Star light, star bright,
First star I've seen to-night!
Wish I may, wish I might,
Have the wish I wish to-night!"

and turning round once, threw a kiss to the star.

"Now I'll get the wish," she declared. "Are you so satisfied with the world that you don't wish anything?"

"Well," he said, "I own that I'm very much satisfied just now. However, there might be a few frills sewed on it," and he gravely performed the incantation.

"And now," declared the Blessed Damozel, "you shall give me your arm and we will walk."

They tramped miles round and

round the narrow deck in spite of Mr. Livingstone's frequent and grave attacks of heart failure and paralysis of the knees, when, on rounding the deckhouse, forward, the force of the wind threw the girl against him and forced her to cling to him with all her strength. He soon learned that an arm judiciously disposed about her waist at such crises was both efficacious and, to himself, delightful. He cherished vague hopes that the promenade would last till morning.

"I think I'm a bit tired," said the girl, presently. Livingstone's heart sank. So they went aft and stood by the port rail, where the deckhouse sheltered them from the sweep of the wind, and watched the great black veil of smoke overhead that streamed back toward England.

"I shall be glad to see America again," said Livingstone, slowly. "It's years since I left there, but—well, I hated to come." He pointed out over the heaving blackness to the southeast. "Paris is over there," he said, wistfully, "*my* Paris. Jimmy Rogers and Simmons are sitting out in front of the Source or the Pantheon, on the Boul' Miche', drinking things, and Johnny Gurd and Hopper, and all of them; and the *cafés chantants* in the Champs Élysées are full of people and music and lights, and the boulevards are—bah!" He laughed and shook his head. "If it weren't for you, I think I should jump over and swim back."

"*Merci bien!*" said the girl. "Don't let me stop you. Perhaps I'd like to go along—and Finisterre is over there, too," she went on, pointing, "not so far as Paris, *my* Finisterre, all cliffs and sea and sky and little queer houses; Quimper and Quimperlé and Concarneau. And over this way, if you want people, there's St. Malo. Oh, let's go back!" She tried to laugh, but there were tears in the laugh, and it faltered and broke.

Livingstone reached for the small gloved hand that lay on the rail and pressed it. Then, "Look, look!" he said. A rim of light, huge, incandescent, sanguinary, pushed up above

the sea's edge to the east, and an orange path shot over the waves to the very side of the vessel.

"Oh, oh!" said the girl, with a little gasp. "It's a dream moon! It's too wonderful to be a real one. Haven't you ever had dreams of moons like that?—great, enormous, blood-red moons that rise out of nothing and hang looking at you, and frightening you, and that finally drag you off to dream places where you have the most unthinkable adventures and wake up shivering? It's frightening me now!"

The moon was clear of the sea's rim, and hung, crimson and portentous, over the black waste. A wandering little remnant of cloud drifted across the huge face and seemed to contort it in a gigantic grin.

Livingstone reached again for the small gloved hand on the rail, and it closed on his.

"It doesn't look frightful to me," he said. "It looks rather friendly, rather as if it would like to do us a good turn. See it grin? That's the best it can do by way of a smile, you know. It is a well-meaning grin. It's saying, 'You poor young things! Here you're going clean across the sea to America, and neither of you wants to go a bit. You want to come back and play—you both know how to play so well! I'd really like to help you, really!'"

The girl gave a little, low, nervous laugh, and the hand in Livingstone's stirred and seemed to nestle.

"See!" she whispered, "it has offered us a way back. We could walk over that yellow path straight to Brittany. Surely it wouldn't let us through into the water."

"We'll go!" cried Livingstone. "It would be sinful not to take such a chance. We're both sorry we came away. And now let's settle just where we're to go. Where do you say?"

The girl stared out at the crimson moon with half-shut eyes. Little curls of hair, loosened from the veil blew across her face, white in the darkness, and she smiled.

"Morlaix," she breathed; "Morlaix on the cool, clean north coast. Blue sky and gulls overhead and blue water out at sea, with a creamy froth of foam under the cliffs, miles and miles of heather stretching inland, and a keen, clean, sweet wind blowing always, blowing all your troubles and bad temper and little meannesses away. Ah, you and I on the cliffs of Morlaix, with the wind in our faces and the sea splashing, splashing down below!"

"I've something better than that," said the man. "Morlaix is good, but I've a better; a little island in a sapphire-blue lake, the merest bit of an island, a tangle of shrubbery and flowers and stained marble. It is terraced to the south, seven terraces, and on the top one there's a half-ruined villa. No one has lived in it for years. And on the north side there's a wilderness of garden full of red and white flowers, and great purple blossoms that cling to a broken fountain and to moss-grown nymphs, armless and noseless. When you've pushed through the flowers you come to the wall that rises from the water's edge, and up beyond you, over the hills at the head of the lake, there's a huge glitter of white, the snow peaks from the Simplon to Monte Rosa. They don't look a mile distant. There are singing birds in the ilex trees and the acacias, and a tattered white peacock marches up and down the garden wall, and screams maliciously at any boat that comes near. There's where we'll go," he said, nodding gently. "We'll buy my little island from those Borromei chaps. We'll build up the villa where it is falling to pieces and we'll stain it lemon color or pink. We'll hire a gardener and a woman or two from one of the towns, and we'll leave word with the boatmen at Pallanza and Stresa and Baveno that they mustn't row any more tourists to our island. Tourists, indeed! And there we'll live—with the big, fierce flowers in the garden and the peacock and the blue sky. In the evenings we can sit in the garden and watch the snows to the north

turn pink and blue like mother-of-pearl, and the water of the lake grow gray. And when it's dark the music will begin at the big hotels over on the Punta della Castagnola. And when you grow tired of having just me about—"the girl's face turned up to him and she smiled, while the hand in his stirred again and nestled—"why, then we can be rowed over to the Castagnola or to Baveno, and hunt up the people we know in the hotels there. Do you like my island?"

"Like it?" whispered the girl, "like it?"

"And then, in October, when the winds from the snow begin to grow cold, we'll shut up the villa and give it our blessing and run away south to Rome, and south still to Naples—we can loaf about there in Sorrento and Pozzuoli and Capri and Ischia—and east to Brindisi, where we'll catch a P. and O.—and there's all the big, gorgeous East to pick and choose from till April, when we can come back to Maggiore."

The girl bent her shoulders over the rail and laid her cheek on the two hands there, hers and his.

"Need I tell you how sweet it would be?" she breathed.

"Would?" he demanded.

The cheek nestled closer.

"Will," she whispered. "Ah, so sweet! Ah, so beautiful! The happy dreams one had when one was a girl in school all come true! The castles one builds and paints of lonely evenings turned to gold and marble—real castles! But oh, aren't you afraid? What do you know about me? You've seen me during one dinner, and talked to me about a sunflower. Maybe I'm an adventuress. Maybe I'm a Boston schoolma'am out for a lark. What if, after we had raced back to Brittany, to Paris, to Lago Maggiore, you found I'd a nasty temper and a shrewish disposition, and was given to tippling and wore false teeth?"

She looked up with round eyes.

"Why, then," declared Livingstone, cheerfully, "I should beat you—wife-beating isn't seriously regarded on

the Continent. It is considered hygienic. I should beat all the nasty temper and shrewish disposition out of you."

She giggled delightedly. "I should adore beatings!" she cried. "I've never been beaten in all my life. Of course I was spanked—frequently."

The man laughed. His face was turned out to sea and for a long time he made no sound, only there was a steady little smile on his lips.

The hand recalled him presently.

"Tell me what you're thinking," said the girl; "you aren't polite."

He shook his head and drew a long breath. "What's the good of telling?" he said; "and some of it couldn't be told. I was thinking of the life a certain worthless young chap is looking forward to. I was thinking of seeing those gorgeous eyes of yours and that beautiful face over the coffee every morning, turning pink at first, when you had to ask me how many lumps of sugar. I was thinking of your coming to show off wonderful new gowns and mysterious hats to a simple-minded male being who wouldn't appreciate the gown or the hat at all, but who would be starving to take into his arms what the gown held and the hat covered—to kiss the warm mouth, to crush it with kissing, and the roseleaf cheeks, and the black lashes that are altogether too fond of hiding dear eyes. I was thinking how proud he'd be, this worthless young man, when people pointed after her at Homburg and Baden, and in Paris and Nice and Rome, and scraped up acquaintance with him in the smoking-room to get an introduction to her. I was thinking how he'd be happiest of all sitting beside her or at her feet in their island garden under the acacias, holding her slim, cool hands and telling her just how beautiful and unspeakably lovely she was. I was thinking—oh, thinking of all the beautiful little intimate things that can't be told and that come along day by day in a big, strong love. What's the use of trying to tell?"

The small, gloved hand quivered.

"I've wanted," cried the girl, softly, "oh, all my life I've wanted to be made love to like that—" The voice came in little gasping half-sobs, "and nobody ever did it. Ah, why didn't you come sooner? *Why* didn't you?"

Someone from within opened a port of the over-heated music-room, and at once the chatter of voices and the sound of laughter came out to the two on deck, with a rush of warm air and the scent of roses. Someone was at the piano singing the "Star of My Soul," from "The Geisha."

"Dream, oh, my dearest, till we meet once more;

Day dreams of happiness again in store,
Dreams of a future that our fates may hold,

Passed in a wonderland of love untold."

It was a contralto voice, that tone which words are so utterly powerless to describe, a voice like a 'cello—that makes one want to say "chocolate," if only it were not ridiculous.

"'Passed in a wonderland of love untold'—that's it," said the girl, softly. "Don't you suppose I can picture what it would—will be? Don't you suppose I can shut my eyes and imagine the simple-minded male being taking what the gown held and the hat covered into his arms and kissing her lips, crushing them with kissing? Don't you suppose I can call up a thrill from head to foot when I think of it? I should hate the simple-minded male being if he only said the gown was pretty and the hat was smart. That would be too much like real life, not our moon country, not our island dreamland at all." She threw a kiss with her free hand to the moon, small and silver and high overhead now. "You're a dear moon!" she cried, with a little, low laugh, "even if you do turn the head of a silly little girl and a silly little boy and set them to talking madness."

She turned about, still laughing softly, and pressed her hands over her eyes, as if she were waking from sleep.

"Moonshine and madness, *mon*

ami!" she said. "Ah, but a heavenly moonshine and a sweet madness—strangely sweet! I sha'n't forget it quickly. What solemn nonsense we've been talking—what atrocious nonsense!" She shook a humorously reproving head at the silver moon. "You're an untrustworthy old party. You put queer notions into young folks' heads. A sweet madness," she sighed, "though very mad. Wouldn't it be beautiful if—ah, that great, big, unsurmountable 'if!'—if that path of light out yonder could only be walked on, if only we knew something about each other, if—oh, if the thousand other big obstacles could be sunk in the sea? But we're well away toward America, my friend—and we've never even been introduced to each other!"

"That last," admitted Mr. Livingstone, "is an unsurmountable barrier, I grant you. As to the others, madness has been known to become permanent, and—you forget that we haven't touched at Queenstown yet."

"Queenstown!" she cried, softly, "Queenstown! Why—why—we could go—back—yet!"

The shaft of light from the open port struck full across her face, startled, amazed, full of a certain unwilling joy, full of a deprecatory laughter. The great gray eyes stared at Mr. Livingstone.

"We can get off at Queenstown tomorrow," he said, eagerly, "and go back on a Holyhead boat. The other 'ifs' aren't worth considering. Good God! don't you know, don't you realize to the very bottom of your heart that we're made for each other? Does it take two such as we are a year to find it out? Are you going to stand for conventions? Come back with me! Chuck up everything and come back with me! Look at me, dear. Are you afraid to trust yourself to me? Look at me. Can you find anything in me but worship of you?" He took her hands again and they lay shaking in his. The big eyes were upon him, half-fearful, half-full of a frightened joy. "If the moon has turned us mad, why, mad we'll be all our lives!"

Oh, it is a sweet madness, you have said it! Dearest, come back with me from Queenstown to-morrow, and we'll live out all we've dreamed to-night—and more."

"Dream, oh, my dearest, till we meet once more—"

sang the great contralto from the music-room—

"Day dreams of happiness again in store,
Dreams of a future that our lives may hold—"

and from the bridge deck there came six bells.

"Oh, it's absurd!" cried the girl, pulling away her hands. "Don't make it hard for me, dear boy, not any harder!" She laughed a bit hysterically. "We're both moon-mad yet. If it's any comfort to you to know, I'd give half my life to run away with you to-morrow . . . Come, it's six bells, eleven o'clock, and I must go to my bed. I'll see you to-morrow. We shall both be in our right minds then. Good-night—and—yes, you may kiss me."

Then when he had set her down she stood trembling a little and gasping for breath, but after she had started away toward the cabin she came back a moment and put her hands on his arm. "Promise me something," she said, softly; "promise me that—that whatever happens after to-night, you will always think of me as I have been in these two or three hours."

Then she went below.

Livingstone lighted his pipe with "flamers" four times, then, his abstraction continuing, he threw it overboard, under the impression that it was a cigarette; and next to an old 'varsity sweater bearing a white Y it was his dearest possession, too.

The next morning he was down for an early breakfast. The girl's chair was vacant. The one to its left was also empty.

"Wonder who belongs there," said the American.

"No one in it last night. Queens-town arrival, probably."

He loafed anxiously about the deck for an hour. Then he saw her coming from the other end of the ship.

"Who's she picked up now?" he growled. "Villainous looking little beggar! By Jove, it's Rochemont-Sorel! The swine! What in heaven's name is that little beast doing here? He's married, too. I read it in the *Figaro* a month ago nearly. I say, I'll have to give that girl a friendly word in the ear. She mustn't be seen about with him."

The girl was rather pale, and there were black circles under her eyes.

"White nights," commented Livingstone. "'Tisn't becoming."

She saw him when only a few steps away. Her face went perfectly white, and at first she made as if to pass hurriedly. Then she paused, halting her companion with a touch on the arm, and turned toward the young American with a sort of desperate defiance. Her eyes were miserable and pleading.

"Good-morning, Mr. Livingstone," she said; "will you let me present you to—to my husband, le Comte de Rochemont-Sorel? My husband was ill last evening—which was not at all gallant of you, Henri, on your wedding journey."

Mr. Livingstone put out a hand behind him swiftly and caught at the rail. His eyes were on those of the Comtesse de Rochemont-Sorel. Then he bowed politely.

"Ah, but M. le Comte and I have met before," he said. "In Mentone, was it not, M. le Comte?"

M. le Comte de Rochemont-Sorel turned a deep rich purple. He made certain choked sounds, presumably of uncontrollable joy at the *rencontre*, but manifested a strong inclination to continue his walk.

Mr. Livingstone bowed again profoundly. "I wonder at what time we reach Queenstown?" he said, looking into the eyes of the Comtesse de Rochemont-Sorel. Then as she turned away he hummed a certain beautiful little air from "The Geisha" called "Star of My Soul."

AFTERGLOW

IF only at the last your tears may fall
 Upon my upturned face of helpless clay,
 Unfearing, I shall tread the hidden way
 And follow where the mystic voices call.
 If only at the last you deem me fair
 And whisper tender words—ah, I shall know!
 Beyond the Wintry branches, leafless, bare,
 My longing sight awaits the afterglow.

If only at the last a little while
 You kneel beside me in the darkened room,
 Amid the drifted white of Springtime bloom,
 It seems as if my silent lips must smile.
 If you should lay rosemary 'midst my rue
 And kiss my empty hands, and softly hold
 My fingers in your own, I'd dream of you,
 And all my saddened skies would turn to gold.

If only at the last your dear lips say:
 "I love you, sweet," as in the yester-years,
 I think I shall be glad for all the tears
 That fill and blind my pleading eyes to-day.
 Yea, in my sleep I'd turn to kiss again
 The lips that, quivering, prayed above me there;
 My doubting heart shall find its healing then,
 If only at the last you seem to care.

If only at the last a little love
 May follow me beneath the shielding sod,
 And that be yours, I shall not ask of God
 A truer way His saving grace to prove.
 A-dreaming where the wind-swept grasses grow,
 That last "good-night" I shall forever hear;
 And my face wear the light of afterglow
 If only at the last you love me, dear!

MYRTLE REED.



NO IMMEDIATENESS

HE—Do you believe in love in a cottage?

SHE—No, indeed, I don't.

HE—How about love in a palace?

SHE—Oh, George, this is so sudden!

HE—Well, it won't be—if we've got to wait till I earn the palace.

IN REGARD TO MADRAS

By H. Knapp Harris

IT was August in Calcutta. In a low bamboo chair Miss Flossy lounged supinely, nibbling daintily that favorite Anglo-Indian confection, almond toffee. She wore a long, loose diaphanous dressing-gown, billowy with lace, that itself seemed possessed of the ineffable languor of the East.

"Calcutta in August comes about as near my idea of Dante's picnic grounds as any place I ever expect to find *short* of that region," she laughed, lazily, holding up a damp handkerchief that she had been applying to her pretty, flushed face. "It's three whole months since I came to this 'cradle of the race,' Aunt Nellie, and I've never yet told you a word about my trip over. I've fished out my notebook to-day—I actually kept one, you know—and I'm going to read you——"

"Spare me! in mercy spare me!" laughed the dark-eyed, piquant little woman who lounged beneath the creaking and flapping wings of the *punkah*. "Haven't I crossed three times?" She yawned helplessly behind a white hand. "What have I done to deserve this?"

"But I want to tell you what we did at Gibraltar and Ceylon and Madras. I—I *must* tell you about Madras, Aunt Nellie. I've tried before, but——"

"Well, don't I know all about Madras?"

"N—no, I don't believe you do," stammered Flossy, her face suffused with a sudden rush of color that could not be attributed to the heat. "You see we—well, it was quite out of the ordinary what we did at Madras."

"The very same stereotyped things, probably, that all tourists do. Gazed with Occidental eyes at Oriental wonders, and gushed over your first sight of palms and palmettoes. Do hand me a fan, Flossy; I'm simply grilled. I do believe that stupid *punkah wallah* has gone to sleep again. The *punkah* seems to be at its last gasp. He usually ties the string to his big toe, but I suppose he's too far gone now to even wiggle that. Well, if you're bound to read that notebook——" She yawned again and looked resigned and hopeless. "Of course, there was the usual heterogeneous collection of people on shipboard that one always finds on a Peninsular and Oriental ship," she continued. "There was the captain, in white duck and a pith helmet and roaring good spirits. And several flirtful wives whose husbands are in the Service, returning from Home. Always begin Home with a capital letter in India, Flossy. Then there was a sprinkling of callow subalterns, who begin to look white about the mouth the first day out. And weren't there a bride and groom?"

"Well, rather! There were no less than three newly married couples. And every one of them was in the honeymoon state of beatitude that borders on imbecility. They sought out all the secluded corners on the hurricane deck, and were so in love that the artificial palms in the cabin shriveled up if they sat too near them. Then there were the cute little brown *punkah wallahs*, with red sashes tied round their pouchy, aldermanic figures, that always made me think of chocolate glacé. Then there were the jolly Jack tars and the picturesque Las-

cars. And the spinster missionaries—my! what a big instalment of spinster missionaries there was going over! What a tiresome life—poor things!—to sit under a bread-fruit tree and distribute marshmallows and tracts to the heathen! One of them had the berth above mine; and all the way over my frivols and chiffons kept getting mixed up with her Bibles and tracts. She wore eyeglasses and a green veil, and was either in a chronic state of weeps or of saying her *pater-nosters*. Then there was a wan-faced, anemic little clergyman who was going over to Burmah. Every morning he gathered the spinster missionaries round him in the long saloon for prayers before the tables were set for breakfast. It looked like—like a sort of highly religious harem. He had a long, lean, melancholy face and one loose tooth, right in front, that wobbled when he talked. It got on one's nerves awfully! It seemed to fascinate me—I couldn't help looking at it. He seemed to punctuate his conversation with that tooth. And then there was a pretty American girl who was chaperoning her mother in the usual high-handed American girl way. The first mate was madly in love with her. She flirted outrageously with him as far as Ceylon, then she transferred her dimpled smiles and favors to a black-browed Companion of the Indian Empire who was returning from a three months' leave. After that the melancholy little first mate moped round and glared at them from remote corners like the handsome tenor in an opera, and ate absent-mindedly of anything that was set before him, drank champagne and looked as if he wished he had never been born."

"It sounds paradoxical," drawled little Mrs. Stanlaws, sleepily, munching a square of almond toffee. "Just think of the fathomless depths of despair into which a man must be sunk to drink champagne and at the same time wish he had never been born! The thing's impossible. You ask too much of my imagination."

"Y—yes," stammered Flossy, apologetically, "it *does* sound Mun-

chauseny. But he was so soaked in soulful sorrow and sunk in the depths of 'some divine despair,' and all that Swinburnian and Tennysonian sort of thing, you know, that champagne just went off him like water off a duck's back."

She fluttered the leaves of her notebook a moment and burst into a ripple of laughter. "And those dear little brown *ayahs*—I have a lot about them. They took care of the English *memsahibs'* babies, you know. And then there was Teddy Vanderwater. He was Mrs. Van Rasseler-West's brother, you know. He comes over every alternate year in the interest of the big tea and spice house in London of which he is the junior member. But he says he wouldn't live here if you gave him all Bengal and threw in the Viceroy's *tulub* (pay). He was *so* kind to me coming over!"

"Haven't a doubt of it; it probably didn't cost him any effort."

"Especially in the Bay of Biscay. Oh, but the Bay did live up to its reputation!" went on Flossy. "One doesn't quote much poetry about the beauties of 'life on the ocean wave' when sousing down fathoms deep and bobbing up again to the top of yeasty mountains in the Bay of Biscay! But when I could stagger out on deck Teddy Vanderwater was sure to be there to take a header toward me with steamer rugs and a deck chair, and lemonade with *real* ice in it—I think he hypnotized the steward to get that—and boxes of orange glacé—"

"Begin with Gibraltar," came sleepily from little Mrs. Stanlaws, as she punched the couch pillows under her head. "Do pull down those *chicks* (Venetian blinds), Flossy, and get on to Gibraltar."

"My notebook says, 'Frowning Gibraltar glowered upon us with its bristling guns—'"

"Sounds familiar. Must have got it from 'Round the World,'" came with a smothered laugh from the occupant of the couch under the *punkah*.

"And of course I was wild to go up into the Alameda Gardens. Don't they

just make you think of a great big beautiful fairy world clinging there on the mountain side, Aunt Nellie? And Teddy Vanderwater was *so* kind! He rushed round and got us a wobbly vehicle which was a cross between a prairie schooner and a blue hearse, with a wildly flapping top and a whole scale of hysterical squeaks. And on the way back we fell among thieves——”

“You—you don’t mean——?”

“Curio dealers, Aunt Nellie—they’re the biggest thieves in Christendom. And I loaded Teddy Vanderwater down with Persian china, and Cairo lamps, and wicked-looking Ghurka knives, and vases, and fans—oh, but he was an amiable pack-horse! When the fierce-looking Spanish grandee I’d bought them of handed me the bill, and like the Ancient Mariner ‘fixed me with his glassy eye’ and tried to make me understand how much I owed him, I asked Teddy Vanderwater if *he* knew what the fierce little man was trying to say, and he laughed and said he had no idea, but that it *sounded* like the price of a corner lot in Paradise. Isn’t he droll?”

“Very,” with a smothered yawn. “Your notebook seems to be fairly bristling with Teddyisms. But one can’t live on *bons mots*, however delicious. You would have shown better judgment to have given him his *cong  * when you reached the Bombay jetty, then he wouldn’t have been trailing after you all these months in Calcutta. You’d better go and dress, Flossy—it’s almost two, and Colonel Heathcote is sure to call before tiffin. Don’t wear that yellow chiffon; it isn’t full enough in the back breadths. Give it to some of those American missionaries—they don’t care how scant they are in the back breadths.”

“And then, one beatific morning,” went on Flossy, ignoring the interruption, “behold a wonder! There was historic old Vesuvius spitting fire like an angry god. And Teddy Vanderwater declared that he *knew* the unaccommodating monster consented

to erupt just for my benefit; he says he has crossed three times before and he never saw it emit a spark big enough to light a cigarette. Fancy!” Flossy’s white teeth flashed in a reminiscent smile, and she seemed lost in happy reverie.

“Teddy didn’t order any earthquakes, or typhoons, or showers of falling stars, or anything in that line, did he?” sarcastically. “You know perfectly well, Flossy, that you practically engaged yourself to Colonel Heathcote last London season, when he was over——”

“It wasn’t announced.”

“No, I grant that; simply because you wouldn’t let it be. But you sailed, under Mrs. Rassel-West’s chaperonage, as his fianc  e. Of course Teddy Vanderwater is a very nice fellow——”

“Oh, awfully!”

“As far as he goes, that is. But he’s not to be *thought* of matrimonially. He’s good-looking——”

“Oh, awfully!”

“I admit he has a taking manner and a good deal of magnetic——”

“Oh, loads of it! And so considerate, and strong, and warm-hearted; and generous to a fault.”

“Especially to his own faults,” struck in little Mrs. Stanlaws, maliciously, dangling a small Turkish slipper from her toe and smothering an abortive yawn.

“And at Naples,” went on Flossy, enthusiastically—“oh, *have* you ever done Naples, Aunt Nellie?”

“Do you suppose I’ve crossed three times, child, and haven’t done Naples to a finish?”

“Oh, but have you ever done Naples, and seen the loads and loads of flowers, and the blue bay, and the dear little donkey with bells, and—and been in love, Aunt Nellie?”

“No,” said little Mrs. Stanlaws, rising suddenly on her elbow and giving vent to a very plebeian sniff; “no, I’ve never done Naples with a donkey and been in love—with the donkey.”

With the amiable placidity of one of Fra Angelico’s angels Flossy rattled on:

"And at Pompeii—of course you've done Pompeii, Aunt Nellie?"

"To the last ditch."

"Well, so had Teddy Vanderwater; but——"

"Oh, for mercy's sake, Teddy me no more Teddies! Let me hear of *some* place without Teddy in the foreground!"

"But—but you don't want 'Hamlet' with *Hamlet* left out, do you?" said Flossy, daringly. She held a square of toffee high above her head and dropped it into her small, laughing mouth with a grace and ease suggestive of legerdemain. "Of course he knew Pompeii by heart. But do you know, it was just like his unselfishness to rush round to all points of interest with me and help me absorb a lot of ancient history and lava dust."

"And where, in the meantime, was your supposed chaperon? She doesn't figure very conspicuously in your narrative. You weren't chasing round to all these places alone—with the Unselfish Young Man, I hope. Where, may I ask, was Mrs. Van Rasseler-West?"

"Where was she? Why, she—she was in the Temple of Juno reading Bulwer's 'Last Days,' of course, and keeping her eyes on the text like any well-regulated chaperon who is up on her part. She's a perfect love, Mrs. Van Rasseler-West is."

"Oh, I see."

"But Mrs. Van Rasseler-West *didn't*. She absolutely never saw *anything*—except the scenery, you know, and the guide book, and the distant hills. Oh, she was a perfect dear, Teddy Vanderwater's sister was! And evenings on deck, when the moon played hide-and-seek in the rigging, and we did a two-step on a holy-stoned deck, she always strummed on her mandolin and—why, really, I never saw anyone so perfectly lovely and so self-effacing. And the ship's officers were all so nice to Mrs. Van Rasseler-West! The captain used to bring her roses, and bonbons, and——"

"Oh, I see. I just wondered, when you told me that Mrs. Van Rasseler-

West chaperoned you coming over, I wondered, at the time, who had chaperoned Mrs. Van Rasseler-West. And did you stop at Port Saïd, that iniquitous old place? And what did your chaperon read at Port Saïd?"

Flossy was fingering a small, withered bunch of jasmine flowers that lay meekly crushed against the page and exhaled a faint, sweet perfume.

"Oh, yes; I'll never forget Port Saïd. It was there I dropped a glove, and—oh, well, it didn't amount to anything, of course, only I saw the finger of it afterward sticking out of Teddy Vanderwater's inside coat pocket, and he *didn't give it back to me*. Yes," with a beatific sigh, "I'll always remember dear old Port Saïd, with its glittering gambling houses, where the black-browed men went in and out, or sipped their drinks at rustic tables under the trees. It looked like the opening scene of a comic opera. Awfully handsome men—but Teddy Vanderwater said that he was morally sure every one of them had a knife up his sleeve. It was there that we sat in the Park and he told me about India and——"

"And your chaperon read—what?"

"I don't just remember. But something awfully absorbing—anyway, there were two volumes of it. And Teddy Vanderwater kept talking about tigers in India, and centipedes, and tarantulas, and mutinies; he thinks it's a frightfully unhealthy climate and a very undesirable place to live."

"I think so, too—for Teddy."

Flossy was stroking her cheek with the faded jasmine flower as she went on. "And then at moonrise one balmy evening, far in the distance, we saw the shadowy outline of Ceylon."

"And there were sixteen people on the quarterdeck quoting: 'What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Ceylon's shore,'" chimed in little Mrs. Stanlaws, as she fanned the blond hair off her forehead briskly. "Oh, I know them—haven't I suffered from 'em? I'm simply parboiled in this heat; have the *ayah* bring us some lemon ice. How I wish Tom

could afford to take us to Simla for the hot weather, away from this sizzling Calcutta. Of course, you'll spend your hot-weather in Simla. Colonel Heathcote owns one of the swellest little bungalows there."

"But I have no possible interest in his Simla bungalows."

"You've lost your mind, Flossy, coming over."

"No, it wasn't my *mind* I lost."

"And I simply won't listen to your being so blind to your own good fortune. Such a catch as Colonel Heathcote is, too! Under Secretary, you know, immense salary; and his social position——"

"As I was saying," continued Flossy, monotonously, "beautiful Ceylon, with its fringe of cocoanut palms, and the spinster missionaries quoting: 'What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle,' while the very wind round the flag-staff seemed quavering, 'And only man is vile.' The pale-faced little clergyman with that wobbly front tooth sang, in a high, nasal falsetto, 'Lead, Kindly Light.' And the little missionary with the green veil did a silent weep which was part nostalgia and part a horrible cold in the head from those changeable trade winds."

"Do get on to Madras, Flossy," came petulantly in a smothered voice from the couch. "Had Mrs. Van Rasseler-West reached the second volume by Madras?"

"Poor dear," sighed Flossy, with sweet compassion, "she had a perfectly frightful headache and simply couldn't leave her berth."

"In the name of the saints! You don't mean to tell me you outraged the proprieties by prancing off round Madras——"

"With the spinster missionary and the anemic little clergyman, and Teddy Vanderwater? Of course. . . . Wasn't that the gate, Aunt Nellie?" She rose lazily and walked to the open casement. "I thought I heard the gate. I like that queer little custom you Anglo-Indians have of putting a box at the gate when you don't want to receive; your

friends just drive by and drop in their visiting cards, and thank their lucky stars for getting off so easily. You told the bearer *darwaza bund* (the door is closed) to-day, didn't you?"

"Yes," yawned Mrs. Stanlaws, "but of course Colonel Heathcote understands he has the privilege of intimacy, and can 'run the box' at any time. Which being translated from Anglo-Indian to English means, can come in just the same, though to the rest of the world we are not at home. But we are all victims to the ridiculous custom of calling from twelve till two, the very hottest hours of the day. The natives have better sense—they lounge in the shade and smoke their hubble-bubbles, and know that Allah or the Viceroy will provide backsheesh and rice for the morrow. You'd better dress, Flossy. The Colonel is sure to want you to drive round the Maidan after tiffin."

"I'm not going—it's too hot."

"Nonsense! You didn't think it was too hot to explore those stuffy bazaars with Teddy Vanderwater. Why doesn't he go back to London? I never knew him to stay here through the hot weather before."

"He's been doing Calcutta with me. I've learned that a Rajah is never a Mohammedan, and that a Hindu is never a Sheik."

"And you've magnified every small, inoffensive cockroach into a centipede or a tarantula, and eaten those puffy custard apples and corpulent mangoes, and have escaped cholera, gout and leprosy. I'm at the end of my patience with you. There isn't a girl in all Bengal who wouldn't jump at the chance——"

"Nobody jumps in India, Aunt Nellie. The climate is not conducive to such exertion."

"—who wouldn't jump at the chance of becoming the wife of the Under Secretary. The social position is so desirable——"

"If one could only say the same of the Colonel!"

"Flossy, you're simply incorrigible! Colonel Heathcote is a distinguished gentleman; *what* can you

find to object to in him? Always refined, courteous, immaculately well groomed——”

“‘Thrice armed is he whose dress coat fits,’” quoted Flossy, airily, with a *moue* of pretty contempt.

“I concede that he ‘doesn’t handsome much,’” admitted little Mrs. Stanlaws, “but there are other things of more——”

“Oh, I can’t *bear* the back of his neck!”

“Flossy!”

“No, I can’t. It’s fat and it’s wrinkled just like those little pink pigs one sees in front of the markets.”

“Flossy!”

“And he puffs and he wheezes, and he laughs a fat, asthmatic chuckle—and he’s so much older than I am, Aunt Nellie, that by the time I am forty he will be so wizened and dried up he’ll just crackle like old parchment. And I just *hate* that yellow fuzz on the back of his big, freckly hands—it’s like the down on a newly hatched gosling!”

“His salary in rupees would make any girl but *you* blind to the down on his hands. He has been very considerate, and has made a great deal of allowance for the fact of your being young and not knowing your own mind——”

“He never made a bigger mistake in his life if he thinks that,” laughed Flossy, with a high head.

“But he won’t keep on forever mooning round you and being snubbed; especially when every mother in Calcutta with a marriageable daughter would give her eye teeth if she could call him son-in-law. Why, Tom says that that swagger English dowager, the Honorable Mrs. Humphrey Ayres, would just think she had ‘buted the bull off the bridge’—to use his own expression—if she could ensnare him for Euphrasia. Here’s the *ayah*,” as a meek, brown creature, with jingling bracelets and clattering anklets, salaamed before her mistress. “What is it, *ayah*?” The girl held a card on a teakwood salver. “Colonel Heathcote. I thought so. Very well, *ayah*,

salaam do (give greeting). Tell the bearer to serve tea and wafers to the *sahib* on the veranda. *Sumja*? (Do you understand?) And say that the little *memsahib* will be down presently. And *jeldi karo* (be quick about it), or may your father’s rice fields wither.”

The *ayah* salaamed automatically and backed through the chattering reed portières.

“Here, *ayah*, *lejas* (take away),” said Flossy, in her very meagre Hindustani, handing over the plate, depleted of almond toffee. She slipped a coin into the lean, brown hand. “And tell the *sahib*,” she whispered, “that the little *memsahib* will not be down. To-morrow *daga dustari* (I will give new clothes), *ayah*, and many ribbons.”

“And now, for mercy’s sake, *do* hurry and dress,” fumed little Mrs. Stanlaws, with her mouth full of hairpins, as she began languidly getting together her own cool muslin and lace preparatory to dressing for tiffin. It was served every afternoon by a florid, turbaned Hindu, who was resplendent in a loin cloth and a vast acreage of glittering brown epidermis; always under the tamarind trees in the compound, with parrots calling noisily from the branches. Gnarled mahogany trees shaded the mossy tank, and a frangipani tree shook out sweet, spicy odors when the south wind ruffled its branches. A spreading banyan tree had, ages ago, preëmpted one corner of the jungly compound, and held out warning arms against all intruders. Here the shrill-voiced frogs and mynas, with acute bronchitis, screeched love songs in the cool of the evening.

“But I haven’t finished telling you about Madras, Aunt Nellie,” began Flossy, breathlessly. “I—we——”

“You don’t propose to keep the Colonel waiting while you prose on about Madras?” mumbled Mrs. Stanlaws, dropping a hairpin from her mouth and stabbing the cushion with a long stick pin. “He has shown the patience of Job. But last night at Government House reception,

when you were mooning with Teddy Vanderwater half the evening out on the veranda, I saw a look in the Colonel's eye——"

"Was it the one that squints, Aunt Nellie?—the off eye, you know."

"—a look of determination that makes me know he has come for his final answer to-day. Why don't you wear that blue organdie with the ruffles, Flossy? Are you going to stand there all day drumming the devil's tattoo on that screen?"

"I'm going to finish telling you about Madras, Aunt Nellie."

"Great Scott! can't I hear about Madras to-morrow?"

"No. I'm going to tell you to-day."

"Then wait till we go down and tell it to the Colonel, too. He's done Madras some half-dozen times or more—but he's interested in *any* sort of gabble from you."

"I'm not going down."

This was given forth like the issuing of a manifesto. Flossy's pretty mouth was set in a determined line now; the very dimple in her chin looked belligerent, and she pushed the tumbled hair back from her face with an excited gesture. She suggested a small, prancing war horse that scents the battle afar and waits an opening to dash into the fray.

She hadn't long to wait.

"You're — not — going — down?" gasped her irate relative, dropping the hair brush and subsiding limply on the couch.

"No—I'm not going down," reiterated Flossy, trailing her diaphanous draperies across the room and dropping in a limp heap beside the bamboo couch, her face smothered in its pillows. When she looked up her cheeks were crimson, and there was a funny little quiver about the corners of her mouth, that trembled between laughter and tears.

"No—I'm not going down. I'm going to tell you about Madras. You see, we went wandering round about the old streets, with their picturesque bazaars and odoriferous natives and quaint old churches——"

"Yes—yes. Do get on, Flossy.

You've gone daffy over that notebook. What do I care about Madras?"

"Well, you see, we found lots of things that you wouldn't have *thought* of looking for; among them a registrar's office and a cute little church all decorated for a native wedding. 'Twas like walking into a big box of Oriental perfume and aromatic spices when we went into that little church—loads of roses."

"Come—come, Flossy, get on. How tiresome you are with your eternal tale of Madras! The idea of your prosing on here over that notebook while the Colonel is driven to profanity down on that sweltering piazza."

"And do you know," gurgled Flossy, with a ripple of happy laughter, "that I just *love* that little homely spinster missionary with the green veil! She and the anemic little clergyman were with us, you know. And after we went back to the ship she did another little weep, which made her nose rosier than ever, and kissed me and said—" Flossy sat suddenly erect, with her saucy chin tip-tilted, as if ready for the oncoming foe, "and said—*that she had never been a bridesmaid before.*"

"Flossy!" Little Mrs. Stanlaws was on her feet now and looking down into the girl's upturned, laughing face. "You don't mean——?"

"Oh, but I *do*, Aunt Nellie," gasped Flossy, breathlessly. "It was all done in a minute in that little church with the loads of roses. And we found a registrar—and the knot's tied as tight as if the Bishop had made the noose——"

"Flossy! you can't mean——?"

"Oh, but I *do*, Aunt Nellie. Teddy promised to love and obey—or I promised to love and be gay—which was it? Well, it doesn't matter either way. And 'with all my worldly goods I thee endow,' and 'till death do us,' and so forth. We made the responses in a voice that made the nervous little registrar jump. And we joined hands and looked silly and scared like they always do—and the little clergyman with the wobbly tooth, you know, did the rest."

THE TROUBADOUR

SWEET songs he sung throughout the moonlit night
 Unto the Court. Love's woe and its delight,
 Love's flush-tide and the tide of love at ebb—
 All this he wove into his measure's web,
 And hearts he touched as surely as his lute,
 Waking lost chords and memories long mute,
 Till the King said: "He knows whereof he sings,
 This poet with his lute of many strings!
 Man cannot sing unless he understand!"

And the King questioned him how he, so young,
 Had known Love's ardors. Then, with laughing tongue,
 The Troubadour made answer: "Certes, sire,
 Man may not touch a star, yet guess it's fire;
 Man may not dive into the ocean's deep,
 Yet know that treasures are within its keep.
 I never trembled at a woman's kiss,
 Yet I have dreamed of Love's supernal bliss.
 My song is art, not heart; each note is planned."

The King's lone daughter in her chamber heard
 The splendid harmony of note and word,
 As the young Troubadour took up his song;
 Through columned corridors she passed along
 Until within her father's hall she stood,
 White with the purity of maidenhood;
 Her face, moon-mild, shone from her hair's soft haze—
 As moon draws water, so she drew his gaze!
 His fingers dropped the strings that they had spanned.

The silence smothered a half-sounded note,
 The song, love-laden, died within his throat.
 His hand, uncertain, sought the strings and marred
 The harmony with notes that only jarred;
 While through his soul thrilled melodies so great
 No sound was meet their glory to translate!
 Then spake the Troubadour: "My lute is dumb!
 Man cannot sing—he *feels*, when Love is come!"
 And lo, the lute fell jangling from his hand!

ELISABETH R. FINLEY.



AT THE SUMMER HOTEL

"SHE has a good voice, but she doesn't seem to be able to control it."
 "No; she sings whenever anyone asks her."

CONCERNING BEULAH

By John Tompkins

I SEE HER

“WHO is that girl dancing with Jack Stafford?” I said.

“Have you a cigarette?” replied Harry. And when I had given him one, “That,” said he, “is the beautiful Beulah.”

“It is a queer name,” I observed. “I shouldn’t mind meeting her.”

“Let me have a match, Jack, will you?” said Harry.

I supplied him with a match. He is always borrowing matches and cigarettes. As he puffed he looked at me quizzically.

“Oh, I’ll introduce you,” said he. “You’ll make a fool of yourself for three days, and that is a long time when a man has only two weeks’ vacation.”

“But why only three days?” I asked.

“Of course,” Harry replied, “you can make a fool of yourself in other ways afterward. But she always throws a man over after three days. It is well known of her, and after that she gives a chap no chance to make a fool of himself.”

“She is coming this way now,” said I. “What else are vacations for except to give a man a chance to make a fool of himself?”

She may have heard me, for she gave me a sudden sidelong glance, with a little lift of her eyebrows that I thought at the time not wholly unattractive.

II

I MEET HER

“MISS HASTINGS,” said Harry, “let me present to you my friend, Mr.

Tompkins, and,” he added, “he’s not a bad sort, Beulah.”

“Your friends never are,” said she, holding out her hand to me.

“Also,” continued Harry, “he insists on making a fool of himself.”

“For as long as possible,” said I, holding her hand a little longer than is essential the first time you hold a girl’s hand.

“I hope you won’t find it too difficult,” she replied, drawing away her fingers.

III

I TAKE HER ROWING

It was a warm, bright, lovely Sunday morning. A light breeze stirred the leaves and broke the water into ripples. I had met her the night before. I had had three dances with her. And at eleven o’clock this morning I was to call for her at her cottage and take her rowing.

Two weeks’ vacation is not a long time.

As I came out from the breakfast table I met Harry.

“Going to Beulah’s this morning?” he asked.

“Why?” said I, “are you?”

“I!” he exclaimed. “I’ve been through the mill. She and I are good friends, and a fellow doesn’t have time to call on good friends when there are other girls around. Well, I hope you’ll have a pleasant morning.”

“Oh, I’m not going,” said I. “By the way, how do you get to her rustic home?”

Harry laughed, without any reason so far as I observed. However, he told me the way and that was all that was necessary.

When I arrived there, at five minutes to eleven, a lady was on the piazza, reading a hymn-book.

"Is Miss Hastings at home?" I asked. Yes, she was at home; she would be down in a moment. Wouldn't I be seated? Her aunt. Yes? And Beulah had spoken of Mr. Tompkins; such a good dancer, too! Now really!

Well, we *had* had some first-rate dances.

At twelve o'clock she came down. "I was so tired after the dance," she said, pathetically. "But there's lots of time yet. I'm *so* sorry to have kept you waiting."

We didn't row very far. We found a secluded spot in the woods. The time passed by not unpleasantly. We had been sitting quite near to each other for a long time, eloquently silent. At last she sighed.

"What is it, dearest?" I asked, tenderly. Two weeks' vacation is so short a time.

"We must go, Jack," she replied; "it's late."

I looked at my watch. It *was* late. It was a quarter to three. Dinner at the hotel would just be over. All the people would be on the piazza. They would see us as we passed by. I wished there was another way to the cottage. As we passed by the hotel piazza I talked to her gaily, as if there were not two hundred impertinent eyes on us and a hundred gossiping tongues wagging, oh, so merrily.

We had got about half-way past the piazza when a sweet, shrill voice called out to me. It was the voice of my small sister—my dear small sister.

"Oh, brother!" the dear little thing exclaimed, "we're all finished with dinner! Where have you been? Mamma's really been quite worried." And then, as an afterthought, "She knew you were out with Beulah!" she shouted.

I cannot say that at the moment I appreciated the loving solicitude of my family.

"What a dear little sister you have," said Beulah. There was a gleam in

Beulah's eye. She seemed to be enjoying the situation. I couldn't see why. Nor did I think it good form for the people on the piazza to laugh audibly. Yet they did.

When we got to Beulah's cottage her mother was standing at the gate.

"Oh," said her mother, "I've been *so* worried; dinner has been waiting for you at least an hour."

I was not asked to stay to dinner.

IV

I TAKE HER TO THE EUCHRE PARTY

TUESDAY evening there was a euchre party. She went to it with me.

"Well," said Harry, when we happened to be at the same table, "the evening of the third day. Is it all over?"

"Far from it," I said.

"Wait till the evening is done," Harry replied.

"This is a serious affair," I said. "No three days' flirtation."

"In love with her?" Harry inquired.

"Harry, old man, I am," I confided. "Not only her looks, though she's the prettiest girl I've ever seen, but her brain, her wit, her character! I'm a lucky fellow."

After the euchre there was a dance. I had engaged the first dance with her that evening. But she forgot it somehow; also the third, which was mine. In fact, she seemed mightily interested in a chap that she called Tom, though I knew she had just met him.

I had two more dances with her after the third, but I forgot them—my memory can be bad.

I sat around on the piazza feeling quite happy. Occasionally I could catch a glimpse of her.

After the dancing was over I waited for her wraps. Last Sunday morning seemed far away. I found it interesting to smoke my pipe, though I let it go out once or twice. At last she came for her wraps. I wondered whether she would spar for time.

"You've been simply horrid," said she.

"Here are your wraps," I replied, rising.

She took them.

"I thought you had forgotten about me, so, as Mr. Hall offered to take me home, I said he might."

She seemed to be waiting for something. For an instant I thought of saying some of the things that were on my lips to say. But instead I struck a match to light my pipe. The match went out.

"Oh, pshaw!" she exclaimed, "the match is out."

"Don't be distressed," I replied; "there are plenty more." And I lighted my pipe.

"It's so sensible of you to have more than one match," she remarked.

"One should be provided," I said.

"I've tried to be nice," she replied, "and you have been simply horrid. Still, I forgive you."

She smiled sweetly. Just then Mr. Hall joined us.

"You know Mr. Hall, do you not, Mr. Tompkins?" said Beulah.

I grasped his hand warmly. "I'm very glad to meet you," said I.

"Won't you hold my cape for me?"

said Beulah, looking directly between us. I had heard the clock strike midnight ten minutes ago. The three days were over. What was the use of holding her cape? Yet I must admit that I should have taken a little longer about it than Hall did. Still, the three days were over.

Nevertheless—why should I not confess it?—I spent the rest of the night writing verses.

V

I READ ALOUD

I LOOKED over what I have here written down; my wife is rather a good critic; I wanted to know what she thought of it. Still, I felt that she might think I had been a rather frivolous person at various times in the past. So I hesitated.

"Well," said she, "I'm waiting."

I cleared my throat and read. "How is it?" I asked, when I had done reading.

My wife sniffed contemptuously. Her cheeks were a bit flushed.

"You don't like it?" said I.

"It makes me out rather a flirt!" said my wife.



PLAINT OF THE SUMMER MAID

AH, me, how dull is a nook,
Though as snug as snug can be,
With just one's self, and a book,
And a circling arm of the sea!

EDWIN L. SABIN.



PRAYER DE LUXE

MRS. NEW-RICH (*to bookseller*)—I want an Episcopal prayer-book.

BOOKSELLER—Here, madam, is a very fine Book of Common Prayer.

MRS. NEW-RICH (*sniffing*)—Do I look like a person who wanted a book of common prayer? Give me the best or nothing. I don't care what it costs.

THE THIRD PERSON

NOW these are the words her husband said:
 "Oh, yes, your gown's all right,
 But you know you never look well in red,
 And the thing's too gay and bright."
*"You light the room like a rose abloom
 With its hundred leaves astir—
 A rose too fair for a clown to wear,"*
 Said the Tertium Quid to her.

Now these are the words her husband said:
 "Good Lord, you women are wise!
 You have raced and chased till you look half-dead
 And have circles beneath your eyes."
*"To-night your smile is as faint the while
 As a star in the mist's dim blur.
 You're tired, I know, but you're loveliest so,"*
 Said the Tertium Quid to her.

Now these are the words her husband said:
 "He'll pay for it, every cent!
 But why should she choose that man instead?—
 She ought to have been content!"
*"Oh, women are dear and women are queer
 And are bought with a coin forbid;
 And their husbands MAY grow wise some day,"*
 Reflected the Tertium Quid.

MCCREA PICKERING.



THE WAYS OF WOMAN

"THERE is one thing about modern society that puzzles me," said the philosopher.
 "What's that?"
 "The older women are all the time anxious to get in; the young and pretty ones want to come out."



HAMLIN'S SOLILOQUY

HAMLIN (*standing before the Tattooed Man in the dime museum*)—
 Heavens! how that fellow must suffer if he ever gets the jim jams!

ORCHIDS OR ARBUTUS?

By Katrina Trask

“**H**OW delicious it all is, Alice! I wonder if you appreciate your blessings!”

“What is delicious, Flora?”

“Everything; that spinning drive in the Park behind those adorable horses; this luxurious, sense-satisfying room; this incomparable tea—where do you get it? Oh, I love wealth! I was made for it, and it was made for me, only we haven’t found each other yet.”

Flora took off her hat and leaned her auburn head, capricious with curls, against the downy cushions. Her relaxed surrender to the comforts was a charming contrast to the vigorous alertness of her erect personality.

“Wealth doesn’t bring happiness,” sighed the placid Alice, whose smooth, unruffled brow looked as if she had never known what it is to be unhappy—or happy, either, for that matter.

“No, it doesn’t bring happiness, but, as someone says, ‘Think of the misery it shuts out.’”

“Flora, I don’t understand how you, with your splendid intellect and your knowledge of spiritual things, can care so much for money, luxury, wealth.”

Flora flashed a radiant, indulgent smile on Alice, and rising, stroked her cheek caressingly.

“My sweet Alice, don’t talk platitudes. It is really funny to see you sitting there behind all that gleaming silver—which suggests English history till I find myself saying George the First, George the Second, George the Third, and so on—dressed in that maddening gown—which is a delight to my eyes—and lauding poverty, which you have never known and never by any possible chance can know.”

“Neither have you known it,” said Alice, emphatically.

“Comparatively—yes, I have; everything is comparative. When I think of the girls in our set I feel like a penniless pauper.”

“But you always look so awfully stunning! Your gown, for example, is much more ‘maddening,’ as you say, than mine. I will leave it to the next luncheon coterie to decide; I am sure that is a supreme court on such matters.”

“My gown? Oh, if you could have seen Minna and me toiling over it! I wasted more energy over the old thing than it was worth; and as for this hat—don’t you think it is smart?—it is made from the bits of last Summer’s. I can smell the sea breezes in its folds. I trimmed it myself, and it cost just three dollars.”

“Well, if it looks much better than mine, which cost forty-five dollars at François’s, what more do you want?”

“In the first place, Alice, that is absurd. You are a delight to my eyes; if you would only put your things on a little differently you would be perfection. But granting, for argument’s sake, if you will, that I look as you say I do, with my pitance, battling with the elements all alone—with no one to help me but poor, patient, long-suffering Minna—she altered these sleeves five times—what should I be if I had *carte blanche*? Wouldn’t I astonish society! I have never been able to understand why women who have money don’t feel an artistic responsibility to the world.”

Alice folded her pretty, white hands and turned her blue eyes reproach-

fully on Flora. She had stanch standards; she belonged to Dr. Bates's Bible class.

"The Bible says money is the root of all evil," she said, reprovingly.

"Not at all, Alice; you are quite wrong; the Bible says no such thing. The Bible says the *love* of money is the root of all evil, and it is usually the people who haven't money who love it most. Of course, the love of money is detestable, vulgar, disgusting."

"But you just said you loved it."

"Oh, my dear Alice! If you weren't the sweetest, truest, dearest thing in all the world, you would be unbearable. Don't—don't, for your own sake, be so deadly literal. Don't you know the difference between loving a thing and *loving* a thing?"

"Flora, if you weren't so sane and well-balanced and jolly and nice, you would be a lunatic—you say such queer, contradictory things."

"Alice, that is clever. Give me another cup of tea."

Alice took Flora's cup and filled it gracefully. She, of course, would not permit herself to be self-conscious or conceited—she considered it would contradict her standard—but if she had any choice of setting for her blond prettiness, of which she tried to be unconscious, it was behind the tea table, toying with the gleaming silver and the fragile cups, that were no whiter than her own hands.

"Flora, when I say anything that sounds like you, anything that is a—what do you call it?—a paraphrase on something you have said, you always think it is clever."

Flora laughed a bright, rippling laugh and sipped her tea.

"Now, let me explain to you the difference, my child," Flora said, after a few moments. "The love of money, as money, is detestable, miserly. It is the lust of having, hoarding, holding; but the love of the opportunity that money brings, the love of the fulness and florescence and usefulness of life which comes from power and opportunity, is quite a different thing. We do not need externals.

As Browning says, 'Incentives come from the soul's self;' but the soul's self can expand and develop best when it can give and move and grow and have the practical opportunity that wealth brings. Look at my music, for example. Don't you suppose my soul grows through my music? I ought to take singing lessons, but I can no more afford a hundred dollars a quarter than I could pay the national debt, and I would not have a poor teacher."

Alice leaned forward, a quick affection in her eyes.

"Flora, won't you please—?"

But before she had finished her sentence Flora was beside her, with a finger on her lips and an arm caressingly around her neck.

"Don't say it, dear, please; I know what you were going to say, and I thank you, but of course I could not speak as freely as this if you thought I was complaining, or if telling you anything personal became personal. I was merely explaining."

Alice pushed away the detaining hand.

"Won't you please, Flora——?"

"Alice, the greatest gift anyone can give me is reverence for my reserve, all the more when I have broken through it. Can't you understand?"

"Yes, I do understand, you dear, proud thing."

Flora went back to her seat and took up her tea and her argument.

"I don't think I feel about wealth as other persons do. With me it would bring out what it seems to shut out in others. The more money women have, as a rule, the more conventional and formal they become, the more they grow circumscribed. As for me, the more money I should have the more romantic and full and emotional life would be. If I had great halls to sweep through, great spaces, I should have a sense that life was more heroic, and I should try to live up to it. If I could do as you do, have artistic, well-fitting gowns, without bothering about them, I could have more time for

other things, and if I had the money to send abroad for my clothes, I should inspire creations—picture dresses. Then I could have musicians and artists and literary men about me, and help them, and make life for them, and a larger life for myself through them; it would be glowing, radiant, rewarding, as well as deliciously enjoyable. I hate a small life; I want to breathe!"

Alice looked at Flora with admiring eyes.

"Yes, I always said if you married a very rich man you would infuse society with new life-blood."

"I intend to marry very soon," Flora announced, with an emphatic nod.

"Oh, Flora! whom?"

"I haven't decided on the man yet. He is a minor consideration, but I intend to marry. In the first place, we are getting old; I am twenty-five, and my visit abroad last Summer convinced me that the plan of a deliberate, calculating, intellectual decision about the holy estate of matrimony is very rational and sensible. A married woman has a larger sphere. Then, I want children."

"Oh, Flora! How can you say such things?"

"If I married I'd have them, shouldn't I?"

"I presume so," Alice answered, reluctantly.

"Well, I think I should be a most improper and immoral young woman to have what I could not speak of."

"Would you marry for money?" Alice hastened to ask, to get on safe ground.

"No, I wouldn't marry for money, but I should thank God if money came with the man I was willing to marry."

"Would it influence you, all things being equal?"

"Certainly. What was my common sense given to me for? But when are things ever equal?" Flora smiled as she continued: "For the sake of my children, who seem to be so objectionable to you, I should rejoice in money; I intend my boys to

be great men. They must go abroad and have a university training, with some years in Germany, or perhaps in France."

"Oh, Flora, how funny you are! You make me dizzy."

"One of my girls is to study art, and one of them is——"

"Flora, stop! I want to find out about the present. That is all my little mind can compass. Would you be willing to marry a poor man?"

"I cannot tell; I never thought about marrying a poor man; I don't know any really poor men well. That is—" she hesitated, the color coming in warm waves—"only one, and he wouldn't marry me."

"Why not, I'd like to know?"

Alice was in arms at once.

"Oh, he is a philosopher and a poet, and wouldn't deign to think of such a frivolous worldling as I am. I met him two Summers ago at that little country place, Deepwood, where mother went when she was ill."

"Is he poor?"

"Absolutely penniless. He has nothing but what he makes by writing, and that is not much. His books haven't any vogue—they are too beautiful," Flora added, under her breath.

"My dear, you are in love with him; I know by your blush—but no, that doesn't prove anything. Your color is always coming and going. I love to sit by you at the opera and watch it, you dear. But are you?"

"Alice! You might as well ask me if I am in love with Plato or Virgil or Dante. He belongs to another world, another life, another sphere."

"Tell me about him; is he attractive?"

"Attractive? what do you mean by attractive?"

"Flora, you know perfectly well what I mean by attractive. Do talk; if you don't talk about him I shall know you are in love with him."

"And if I do?"

"Then I can make up my mind. Is he handsome? Please tell me."

"Yes."

"Is he clever? But of course he

must be, if he is Plato and Dante and all those old stupids."

"Extremely clever."

"What colored eyes?"

"Alice, how absurd you are! Sea-gray sometimes, and sometimes deep blue."

"There! I wanted to see if you remembered."

Flora smiled. "I dare say I should not have the faintest idea had it not been for an incident. One day we drove over to the shore, and while we were sitting on the beach I remember looking at the sea and thinking that it matched his eyes exactly. He was giving me a most delightful talk on early Greek poetry, and in quoting he suddenly looked up; then I remember noticing that the blue sky also matched his eyes."

"Now I know you are in love with him!"

"Why?"

Flora laughed.

"Because you say the sea and the sky matched his eyes. If you weren't in love you would have said his eyes matched the sea and sky."

"Alice, you goose!"

"Well, aren't you? You see I have no reverence for your reserve," and Alice gave a little expressive shrug.

"Alice," Flora's voice had a warning note, "I am not in love with anyone—or," she added, more lightly, "I am in love with several, whichever way you choose to put it. I see so many attractive things in so many different men."

"Oh, yes, we all know you are a flirt."

"Please don't use that word; I hate it."

"Well, aren't you?"

"Not at all. Anyone who is many-sided and is not a pachyderm must respond to many natures in different ways."

"But you prefer cleverness to everything, don't you?"

"That depends on what you mean by everything."

"Yes, of course, because if you did you would not be so intimate with me,

for I am a little fool compared with you. I have always thought," Alice added, suddenly, "that you cared for Maurice van Aldene. I could never tell how much. I never can tell about you, you are so puzzling. He is in love with you, that is perfectly plain."

Again the color swept over Flora's face.

"Really, Alice, we must not talk like this. It isn't good taste to pull sacred things to pieces."

"Now, don't get dignified, Flora. Girls all talk about their affairs. The reason I like you so much is because you don't; but you might—a little, once in a while—just with me. Yes, I think he suits you," she continued. "He is handsome, well-bred, high principled, moderately clever, and most *immoderately* rich. I don't believe you will be able to resist him."

"I have not had much temptation to do anything else. He is attentive to a dozen girls."

"But not in the same way he is to you."

"I think he is much more attentive to Helen Leroy. He likes to talk to me, but then— Why, Alice, look at that clock! I must fly. I had no idea it was so late. I had a delightful drive; thank you so much. You mustn't forget the *matinée* Saturday. Meet me by the box office; and you won't mind the top gallery, will you? The music is much better there."

"Indeed, I shall love it, thank you."

With affectionate good-byes and many last words, and a few last words after the last words, Flora took her leave.

"What a dear Alice is!" she said, as she walked away. "Everyone wonders at our friendship, but I talk to her as I cannot begin to talk to—Marion, for example, with all her congenial cleverness. Alice has a heart of gold."

She had walked a few squares in the gathering dusk when she stopped suddenly. "What is that?" she asked herself. The low, piteous wail of a child came to her ears. She peered

through the falling shadows and saw, crouched on a step, a little prone figure, with clothes too threadbare for the sharp April air. A yellow head, tangled and curly, rested on two crossed chubby hands in an abandon of despair. The wailing ceased and the head was lifted, showing tear-filled eyes, as Flora's strong arms came round the little form with a sheltering sweep that seemed to gather in all the sorrows of the little heart.

"Me want mudder," said the child.

"Yes, darling," Flora answered, tenderly, "we will find her. Tell me where she is."

"Me don't know."

"What is your name?"

"Johnny."

"Johnny what?"

"Just Johnny."

"Now stop crying, Johnny; don't be afraid. Look at me; don't you know you are safe?"

"'Es," said the boy.

"Then, if you aren't afraid, you can show me how you came."

By dint of suggestion, the confusion from fear entirely removed, the boy walked on toward home, until he got his clue to his own environment. Then the situation was simple enough.

Flora mounted the stairs of the dirty, cheap boarding-house, high and narrow, and delivered the boy to his mother. The smell of onions was everywhere; the sights and sounds jarred and clashed on her nerves. The mother seemed a nice woman, in a way, but helplessly and hopelessly blighted by her surroundings.

"Bah! poverty is benumbing," Flora thought, as she hurried home. "It paralyzes the energies and drags one down like a dead weight."

Never had it seemed to her so hard to bear. She found herself tending to philosophic analysis as she walked briskly up the steps of her home, a narrow house on a side street. The door was opened by a trim waitress. It was all in equally sharp contrast to the two pictures her mind held from her afternoon. It was luxury, cozi-

ness, comfort, compared with the dingy, miserable boarding-house; it was restriction, measured by Alice's splendid Fifth Avenue palace, with its liveried footmen and pervasive wealth.

On the little stand in the hall lay several cards. Flora glanced them over carelessly, reading society names that are now familiar shibboleths in the world, for the comings and goings of these people are flaunted far and wide with that ruthless disregard of privacy which is one of the saddest commentaries on our times. Flora's restricted life was in no sense restricted as to these favors. It is a significant fact, malcontents to the contrary, that it is not the size of the house nor the position of the street which secures those much longed for and pathetically prized pieces of paste-board.

"No mail?" she said to the girl, as if that were the real interest.

"Yes, miss, a great pile. I put it in your room—and a great box of flowers, miss."

The lamp had been lighted in Flora's room. She went straight to the table, drawing off her gloves.

"Ah!" An enormous box marked "Personal" took up nearly the entire table, covering half the books beneath it. She saw before anything else the clear, firm, high-bred handwriting of Maurice van Aldene. A curious prescience possessed her. Ordinarily his flowers were not to be recognized from those of others until his card was found, but this box had been rewrapped, personally addressed and evidently sent by hand direct from Mr. van Aldene. A warm wave of color overspread her cheeks, her neck, her brow; then her eyes fell on her mail, and there, on the top of the pile of letters, was a little box marked "Deepwood." This was also addressed in a handwriting she knew well. Quickly she took it and began to break the string; then changed her mind, laid it down and opened the larger box. Such a wealth of color and splendor and mystery as lay before her! Orchids of every

shade and shape and fairy-like wonder. After a moment's sensuous enjoyment she opened the note that lay among them.

MY LADY:

It does not need that I should tell you I love you, for your heart must have told you that long ago; but it does need that I should know from your heart if I may hope, for life holds no quest for me but your love. With that I can live a truer, perhaps a better existence; to be without it would be death in life. Dare I be so presumptuous as to hope? I have sometimes felt that you were not unmindful or indifferent to my presence. Do not, for a moment, dream that I should be so far lacking in what is due to you as to harbor hope without your permission, or to misunderstand you. Your universal graciousness and the radiance of your nature must flash, even as the sunshine, in obedience to its own laws; but I have wrestled sharply with the question of how much of this I might dare claim as a basis for hope. All that I am is yours, and all that I may become through you lies in your power to grant. I will not speak of what I have, save only to say that by a trick of fate it fortunately makes possible whatever life you choose to live. I will not weary you, but wait for your heart to answer mine.

MAURICE VAN ALDENE.

Flora sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. She was silent for some time. But she was not given to long inaction, either in joy or sorrow. She was a swift and conclusive young woman. She turned and opened the little box that had come by mail. A sudden fragrance filled the room—the breath of the Springtime, the sweet smell of the arbutus flower. It lay packed in a bit of soft, damp moss, and upon it was also a letter.

I was walking in the woods to-day and found the promise which the divine power, whatever it may be, sends each year as a pledge that every Winter shall turn to Spring. I took it as a symbol—and I send it on to you. With it I send the call of my soul. Come—be my Spring. The world would say I am mad to love you, and more mad to tell you so. I

have thought of the world and resisted, keeping Winter about me, but as months have passed the thought of you has grown stronger, so much stronger than the thought of the world that I cannot be silent. Your fashionable friends would say that I am grossly selfish, but I know I was more selfish when I was silent, being a coward. How can it be selfish for a man to see the fulness of a life that might be too triumphant to consider lesser things? Will you come, and be my wife, and live? I will not deceive you nor gloss the picture. You will have poverty—stern, archaic. But you will have, also, love which will be archaic—and not stern. Is it not worth it?—to come out from the grind, the rut of life, and find the mountain top, and thus fulfil yourself? I will not do you such discredit as to ask you not to misjudge me in saying that. You know I could not be guilty of arrogance or egotism where you are concerned. Of course you understand I do not mean you would find yourself through me, or that my love would be the mountain top. I mean that the soul-fed forces that would come to you from the emancipation and triumph of your own character in choosing love would be its own Olympus. You would dwell with the gods by virtue of the God-like quality within yourself which had enabled you to give up all for love. I do not ask myself whether you love me. It is enough for me to know the fire of my own love for you. Choose to come into its warmth, and it will answer for the rest. Do you remember Dante? "True love will not suffer the loved one not to love." It is only the men who harbor fear, which perfect love casts out, who are humble. My love for you makes me too proud to be lowly.

STEPHEN READ.

Again the veiled face; again the silence.

Then a voice, sweet and low, at the door: "My daughter, how long have you been at home?" and with quick change of tone: "What is it? are you in trouble?"

For answer Flora rose and put her mother into the chair.

"Yes, mother," she answered. "Read these letters."

The mother read while Flora knelt beside her. When she had finished she said, briefly: "Two very fine men, of different types; both unusual."

"Yes, mother, that is why I am troubled. I must hurt one of them."

"You do not intend to hurt both, my daughter?"

For a swift moment the proud head touched the mother breast. "No."

"There can be no doubt about your decision, dear, for you are you—of course I know what it is."

"Of course."

"Come down to my room when you are ready; I won't disturb you now."

"Thank you, mother; I will write to him first."

After her mother had gone Flora stood a moment, a glowing radiance gathering in her eyes. Then she walked to her desk to write the luminous "yes" that was to transform her life.



AMOR SANCTUS

THE wingèd dawn above the sea,
Born of the night's dun chrysalis,
Is not so marvelous as this—
The mystery of her smile to me.

The splendors of the sea and sky
That men have gazed in wonder on
In all the centuries of dawn,
She lives but to personify.

Love sanctifies her, robes her round
With purity that has no stain;
And I, who have not loved in vain,
I know she walks on holy ground.

God gave her to my love, to teach
What heaven may be to one poor soul,
To lead me upward to the goal
That else were far beyond my reach.

A. G.



KNIGHTHOOD IN FLOWER

BEEENAWAY—And what of Willie Puttipate, whose mother considered him a budding genius?

STAIDHOME—Oh, he turned out to be a blooming idiot!



DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE

SYLVESTER—I wonder if he thought twice before he married her.

FEATHERSTONE—It isn't likely. She was a widow.

THE TEST THAT FAILED

SHE was toying with a curious little triangular dagger in a bent metal sheath. "This weapon," she announced, theatrically, "is poisoned. It really is," she continued, in a more serious tone. "It came from Mexico, and kills with just a scratch. What would you do if I were to plunge it into my breast?"

Her fiancé gazed at her uneasily. This was a new mood to him. In spite of the absurdity of her words, he seemed to read a purpose in her eyes. Superb in her evening gown, that revealed her magnificent neck and shoulders, she was leaning back comfortably on one side of a tête-à-tête, while he sat near her on a precarious, gilded parlor chair.

"What would you do," she repeated, "if I were to plunge it into my breast?" And seeming to suit the action to the word, she drew it forth from the sheath, waved it aloft and brought it down with a swift motion toward her chest. Like a flash the man's hand was in between. She turned aside the dagger in its course—but not in time.

In a moment she understood by his pallor. "Oh, Edward," she cried,

"forgive me. Did it scratch you? It wasn't really poisoned." There was infinite appeal and contrition in her voice.

The man rose slowly to his feet. "Why did you do this?" he asked. His face was pale.

"It was silly, I know," she answered, rapidly and nervously, "but I wanted—I wanted to test you—to see if you were brave."

"I thought better of you," he answered, slowly. "It is not your being romantic that I object to, but do you realize the risk you took? If I had not put out my hand then, as I had to force myself to do, however quick the action seemed, I should have lost both you and my self-respect, the two things in life I value most highly. It is not right to play with danger."

He was speaking sternly, in a voice she had never heard before, and she resented it. "Have you finished your lecture?" she demanded, icily.

The next moment she saw his broad shoulders disappearing through the door. "I wish it had been poisoned!" she exclaimed.

ROY M. MASON.



SUCCESS

I KNOCKED at the gate of my lord, Success;
I stormed his threshold with eager din,
I love him, the prize of my soul, no less,
But he barred the gate lest I step within.

And after, Love took my heart to mate,
And we built us a house in the wilderness.
A stranger is beating against our gate,
Crying, "Let me in! It is I, Success!"

ETHEL M. KELLEY.

AN IDYL OF GREEN WAYS

By William Lucius Graves

THE gentle ardor of a Midsummer sun had hardly dried the early dew before the feet of the lad who followed the windings of the beaten path. He walked slowly, with head bent and eyes fixed unseeingly on the wayside poppies, whose scarlet silken blooms he slashed off as he went with quick blows of a slender switch. He was perhaps nineteen, a graceful stripling, with rebellious gold hair that kept blowing low over his forehead, and smooth cheeks where the red showed clear under his tan. His eyes, when he raised them to gaze listlessly ahead, showed deep blue, like sapphires; but their clear calmness was clouded, as the mirror-like surface of a little lake is filmed by a momentary breeze.

The path he followed wound round the foot of a wooded knoll and then just ahead of him left the open and struck off through a sun-splashed grove of beeches, at whose verge, bough-shaded and grass-set, there was a fountain, a broad, shallow stone bowl held on the bent shoulders of three marble fauns. When the boy reached this he stopped and drank deep of the cool water; then he sank down on the grass, and finding it comfortable, threw himself on his back in the still shade, his hands locked under his head and his eyes shut. There was a long silence; only the shrilling of August insects pulsed in the air. Then he sighed.

"Oh, I grow so weary waiting and waiting, and never knowing! All day long I go about whispering her name and talking to her. And she—she laughs. Always she laughs."

A murmurous breath moved in the

boughs above him, and the bubbles in the fountain broke with an elfin tinkle.

"There is no girl in all the world so sweet—or so perverse. She will not say she hates me, nor yet that she loves me. And I, my mouth shapes a kiss each time I see her, my heart beats so I cannot breathe. Oh, sweetheart! sweetheart!"

For a moment he lay still, then suddenly pulled his hands from under his head and sat up. Somewhere in the air, fainting and swelling with the fitful wind, was the sound of a clear whistle blowing a little lilting tune that ran aimlessly on with many leaps and breaks, like the play of water over stones. The boy leaned on one hand and with parted lips stared wide-eyed down the path where it came round the edge of the knoll. The whistle grew louder, and of a sudden a girl came into sight, slim and elate, moving with a step marvelously light and free. She followed the path toward the fountain, her eyes on a bunch of poppies in her hand, and apparently unaware of her lover. Then, when she was within a few steps of him, with a pretty start she halted and gave back the gaze that met hers. You have leaned at a well's rim and looked far, far down at the water, with the shifting sun-glints in the depths: such dark wells were her eyes, with the gleam of fun in them. She had a cloud of dark hair, and her red mouth trembled with tenderness and laughter.

For a little she gave her eyes to those that looked up yearningly; then suddenly she leaned against the fountain, and dabbling her slender fingers

in the water, she dimpled at the moody face before her.

"Alack-a-day, what languishing is here! The world's a dreary place, indeed, and empty of joys! Why not bind your brows with cypress and forswear smiles forever?"

She threw back her head and laughed, a bubbling, tinkling rapture of inarticulate delight; but the boy only looked down and pulled up handfuls of the fresh grass.

"You are cruel to me," he said, in a low voice.

"I cruel to you?" with a surprised arching of the brows. "I cruel? I think it is you who are cruel to yourself."

She flirted the water at him provokingly from her finger tips.

"See how you stare at the ground when your happy eyes might be seeing themselves in mine."

"Witch!"

He leaped to his feet and pursued her as she fled choking with laughter round and round the fountain, till suddenly she darted to one side and stopped with her back against a tree, waving him off with motions not to be gainsaid, and panting to find breath for words.

"No, no, don't touch me, or I shall pray to the gods to change my shape, as Syrinx did. Small comfort you would have, I think, piping lugubrious airs all day on a reed. No. Sit down again."

"Ah, kiss me once."

"Sit down, I say, here by me, and we will both be very serious and talk about ourselves quite calmly and dispassionately."

He threw himself on the grass at her side, and she, without looking at him, put her hand within his reach. Presently his eager fingers closed over it triumphantly, as she knew they would.

"How old are you?"

"I am a man."

"Answer me! How old are you?"

"I shall be twenty when October comes."

"A prattling babe! And pray, does your father know how you go

moonning after a maid and singing love-lorn ditties to the weary stars?"

He flung her hand away angrily, and immediately caught it again.

"My father——"

"Ah, I see. He does not know. And now, what have you done in the world? The man whom I take for husband should be one whose name will sound loud in the ears of men." She clasped her hands as well as she could while he held one of them, and cast her eyes upward ecstatically.

"What have you wrought, what far-sounding deed have you done that you should dare ask me to marry you?"

The boy looked at her doubtfully, but though her tone was full of mirth she did not laugh, and his voice was troubled when he spoke.

"Indeed, I do not know. You said once—my verses, you remember—but I'm afraid I have not done much. I'm afraid I shall never be famous."

"There, there, stop kissing my hand and tell me this. Suppose we were married: have you a house ready for me? We could not stay here at the wood forever. I think," meditatively, "I think I should choose a little villa just outside the city but within easy reach of it. There should be rose gardens, of course, and a vineyard, and inside the house should have a court open to the sky, with a colonnade of fluted pillars round it, and in the centre a fountain to sing for me all the time you are away. We should be very happy there. Tell me, is there a home waiting for the bride?"

He let go her hand and sat up, clasping his hands about his knees. His tone was one of utter discouragement.

"No, there is no house."

The girl leaned toward him caressingly, but straightened herself as he turned to her.

"So then," she said, "it stands thus! You, a child not out of your teens, would have me be your wife. You have not even told your father that you love me. You have not won yourself a place among men; there is not so much as a roof to cover our

heads! Do you not see that everything forbids me to marry you?"

"Yes," he said, in a trembling voice; "I did not think of anything except that you are so sweet, so dear. I suppose it can never be."

"All about me I hear the same thing," went on the girl, getting to her knees and spreading her arms wide. "'Wed him not,' the wind says, 'he is too young.' 'Wed him not,' the fountain murmurs, 'he is unknown.' 'Wed him not,' the poppies wave, 'he has no fortune.' Everything says that I ought not to marry

you—and for that very reason, if for no other, I will marry you! I love you! Do you hear? I love you!"

She leaned to him, tilted back his head and kissed him lightly on his curving mouth. Then while he struggled with joyous amaze, she fled away down the path fleet as a nymph. With a wild laugh the boy sprang to his feet and followed swiftly.

For a moment there was the sound of their flying feet on the hard path. Then they vanished round the edge of the hill.



ESCAPADE

THROUGH the dull day with dragging duties filled,
 And love long turned to service, I am thine;
 Little of me there is that then is mine—
 My thoughts, my hopes, are even as I willed,
 Bound with sharp cords to thee; long since I stilled
 The hopeless love that warmed my veins like wine
 And made my life the symbol and the sign
 Of steadfast faith, albeit by joy unthrilled.

But in the night, oh, in the night, my heart
 Leaps from its leash, and down the ways of bliss
 Wanders the world through wondrous flowery fields.
 Ah, think not then that there with me thou art!
 Dream not my lips lean upward for thy kiss
 Or that to thee my soul its secret yields!

JOSEPHINE D. DASKAM.



JUST AS HE EXPECTED

WITHERS—I told Pokerbeigh he would play the deuce if he married that girl.

HIGGINS—Well, what has happened?

"She has presented him with twins."



HONORED IN THE BREACH

WILLIS—The New York policeman knows his business.

WALLACE—He has to know it. He'd lose his job if he did what he's paid to do.

THE WIFE

WHEN sleep unbars the gate of dreams,
 And night sets free those silent hosts,
 She walks again by sunlit streams
 With barren Hope's gray-hooded ghosts.

But when the day breaks, cold and dim,
 She leaves that gray-cowled company
 For her peace-guarded house and him
 Whose gentle minister is she.

Through the long day her little feet
 On tender, kindly missions go,
 And of that vague land, far and sweet,
 She fancies that he may not know.

But ah, he sees with love's own eyes!
 To-night he sits beside her bed
 And watches all her phantoms rise—
 Ghosts of dear dreams that long are dead.

He hears the wind in its patrol
 Kiss the wan beeches, towering tall,
 And sees, not whiter than her soul,
 The milk-white moonlight on the wall.

He leans athwart those silver beams
 And stoops to kiss her sleeping face,
 Knowing that in her gentle dreams
 He has no place, he has no place.

ANNE TOZIER PRINCE.



JUDGED BY THE OUTPUT

POET—There is poetry in everything.
 EDITOR—There doesn't seem to be much in the poets.



FASHION FORTISSIMO

HEWITT—Do you think this suit of mine too loud?
 JEWETT—Why, my boy, that suit would make a good selection for your graphophone.

SLEEP, THE RESTORER

By John Dickinson Sherman

“YOU are looking rather fagged out this morning,” remarked John Morton to his partner, Randolph Whitney. The two men were sitting in their law office on the thirteenth floor of the Battery building, and New York harbor, spreading blue and cool before their eyes, made the office seem stifling by contrast.

“I wouldn’t mind being on that boat myself,” answered Whitney, pointing to a steamer making its way to the sea.

“A good idea,” replied Morton. “Suppose you take a rest for a week or two. You’ve been working too hard this warm weather. I’ll take care of things; there’s nothing pressing, anyway. Get on a boat this afternoon and go up the Sound.”

“I don’t know where to go,” said Whitney. “If I did, I believe I’d take the hint and be off.”

“How about Rock Beach?” said Morton. “It’s quiet—only one hotel—no fashionables—fair fishing—plenty of fruit—a good place to loaf in and get rested.”

“By George!” exclaimed Whitney, “I’ll go. And I’ll get off on an early boat. I’m off now to pack up. I’ll write. Much obliged, old man. Good-bye!”

As soon as Whitney was out of the office Morton sat back in his chair and laughed.

“Make or break, survive or perish, kill or cure,” he said to himself. “If it doesn’t work he’ll never speak to me again; if it does, he’s mine for life. But won’t he be surprised when he sees his wife—he thinks she is still in Europe! And won’t he

curse me for an impertinent meddler! If it turns out wrong, how she will hate me! I’ll suffer the fate of all peacemakers, I suppose, but it’s worth the risk. Here are two young fools bent on spoiling their lives. Neither one of them has done anything really wrong, and I’ll bet a house and lot to a canvas tent that they love each other as devotedly as ever. Yet they’ve virtually separated, and now they are talking of a divorce. She proposes it because she wants to find out how he feels about it, and he agrees because he thinks she wants it—both so sensitive and high-strung that they can’t get along like common mortals. Well, I’ve given them another chance, anyway. Kismet!”

When Whitney registered that night at the hotel of the little out-of-the-way Long Island resort he was astonished beyond measure and greatly disturbed to find his wife’s name in the book. His first impulse was flight. But he soon found out that it was the only hotel in the place and that there was neither train nor boat out that night. He left a call for the seven o’clock train the next morning, ordered dinner sent to his room and followed the porter up stairs, hoping with all his heart that he would not meet his wife on the way.

Of course he did. She was astonished at the sight of him, and they stared at each other consciously. She gave him a formal recognition as she passed. He replied with a salutation equally as perfunctory.

Whitney ate his dinner in his room. It was intensely hot; even Long Island Summer resorts are not always

cool. His physical discomfort aggravated his mental disquiet until he was sure he was the most miserable man in the whole world.

"Confound that Morton!" he thought. "He's got a hard nerve to run me up against a situation like this. Of course he meant well, but what business is it of his, I'd like to know? I'll break up the firm. I wonder if she's in the scheme, too. Not she; I'll swear to that. She's as put out to see me as I am to see her. But she'll think I wormed it out of Morton that she was here and tagged along after her to try to make up. I've got to stay and swelter in this oven of a room, or I'll run into her. My trip's spoiled; I can't stay here and I don't know where else to go. And my name on the register will set every tongue in the place to wagging. It's a wonder the clerks didn't show me up to her room. Confound that Morton!"

Even a cigar brought no balm to Whitney. It was too hot to go to bed, so he got into his pajamas, pushed a broad couch up to the window and lay down to brood over his woes and be miserable. But the couch was comfortable, he was tired, and before long he dropped asleep.

It was daylight when he woke. The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was a young woman asleep on a lounge just like his in a room directly across a little court and not more than thirty feet away. It was his wife.

What a beauty she was! How had he ever been able to win such a lovely creature? No wonder he was no fit husband for her; no man could be. Her long fair hair, in two massive braids, made her look almost like a young girl. Her head rested on a silken sofa cushion and one arm was thrown partly over her face, the loose sleeve showing a glimpse of a round white arm. The tip of a little bedroom slipper peeped out from under her wrapper. She was apparently sleeping as peacefully as a child. Whitney sat and stared at her with

his soul in his eyes and a fierce tugging at his heart-strings. The love of the youth and the maid seems serious to them, no doubt, but it is only those who have loved and lost that know the depths.

Suddenly it occurred to him that she might waken and catch him staring at her. He reached up for the cord of the window shade and then stopped short. He left the shade up, lay down on his couch, threw his arm across his eyes, so that he might see without being seen, and waited for her to waken and discover him.

"I will see," said he to himself, "how she feels about me. She will think I am asleep, and if she hates me it will show in her face. It's a mean trick, maybe, but I'm not going to throw away this last chance."

Perhaps there is something in telepathy; at any rate, it was not long before Mrs. Whitney stirred, opened her eyes and sat up on her couch. Almost instantly she saw him. Annoyance was the first expression on her face. Here was a man who could look into her room if he should wake. She caught hold of the shade cord. Then she recognized him. Her grasp on the cord slackened. She hesitated, and was lost. She looked at him long and earnestly. Her face gave no hint of her emotions. But Whitney could detect no hatred in it. Suddenly she let go the cord, threw herself back on the lounge, covered her eyes with her arm, just as her husband had done, feigned sleep and lay watching him.

"Thank heaven!" said Whitney to himself, when she sank back on her couch. "At least she doesn't hate the sight of me. If she did, she'd have pulled down the shade." Then he rapidly revolved the situation in his mind, his thoughts running something like this:

"She thought of the very same plan that I did. She's doing just what I am, pretending to be asleep and looking with all her eyes. Of course she thinks I'm asleep. She wants to see what I'll do when I wake and discover her lying asleep."

After a reasonable interval Whitney moved, turned over, awakened, sat up and discovered her. Of course he was very much astonished. Naturally also his first impulse was to pull down the shade. He actually got hold of the cord. But he paused a moment to look at her. At first his face was stern and unrelenting, and there was distinct displeasure in his glance. Gradually, however, his face softened, his eyes grew kind, then pitiful, then tender. Admiration for her beauty showed next. Soon he was looking at her with his face eloquent with longing. Then, as if overcome by realization of what he had lost, he covered his face with his hands. By-and-bye he looked up with an expression of hopeless misery on his face and took hold of the shade again, but as if struck by a sudden thought he let go the cord, lay down, covered his eyes with his arm and took up the watching in turn.

"That may have been acting," he said to himself, "but it's a case of the actor's losing himself in his part. What a fool I am! I love her as much as I ever did, and I'll win her again if she gives me a ghost of a chance. But getting sentimental won't do now. I've got to keep my eye on the combination and do the right thing, and it's becoming complicated. Let's see! I've just shown her the state of my feelings, and by feigning sleep and letting her know that I'm watching her I have told her that I hope she will do the same in turn. Now it's her turn. She's got to figure out the situation from two standpoints—the one of a woman who is sound asleep and the other of a woman who has been awake before. Actually she knows that I am awake; theoretically she knows nothing. She knows that I am watching her, but she doesn't know that I know she knows. So, if she wakes at all it will be for the first time, and she must discover me. The first question is: Will she wake at all? That depends on whether she wants to go on with this comedy—or is it tragedy? If she wants to 'close the incident,' she can do so by remaining

asleep. Or she can see me, fail to recognize me and pull down the shade. Or she can recognize me and pull down the shade. Any one of the four will do the business. Which is she most likely to do? It seems to me as if I ought to be able to make a pretty close guess. She'll wake up; that's sure. To lie there asleep till the end of the game is commonplace, and nobody ever accused Sally Whitney of being commonplace. The second way would be crude and inartistic, for she couldn't very well pull down the shade without seeing me. She'll see me. And she'll recognize me, too. She'd rather be accused of murder than of stupidity, and it certainly would be stupid for a woman to see her own husband not more than thirty feet off and not know him. The question narrows itself to this: Will she draw the shade? It is likely she will see the opportunity in all its beauty and appreciate it. It's altogether too unique to be terminated by drawing a window shade. She is a woman who has just seen her estranged husband show that his love for her is as strong as ever. She has a chance to act in turn for his benefit. Surely no actress ever had a more interested audience or an odder stage setting. From her standpoint he will think it's genuine; he cannot know it's acting. And best of all, he cannot even know that she knows he sees it. So she can torture him or give him a glimpse of heaven—or both. If she hates him, she can show it, or fool him now, to tell the truth later. If she loves him she can still torment him, or she can meet him half-way and show him her heart. Whatever she does it's torment. But this I know: Being a woman she will not drop the curtain till the play is done."

Now it is not to be supposed that Mr. Randolph Whitney reasoned all this out clearly and collectedly and conclusively. As a matter of fact, he was so excited over the situation that it was all he could do to lie still and make a fair pretense of sleep. Still, the swift rush of thought through his brain, if it could have been captured,

arranged and put into type, would have read somewhat as indicated.

In the meantime it is to be presumed that Mrs. Whitney was doing some thinking on her own account. At any rate, in due time she gave signs of waking from a deep sleep. She tossed and turned and assumed a number of exceedingly attractive attitudes. At last her eyes opened. Soon she sat up on her couch. But she did not pull down the shade. Nor did she discover the man across the court. How could she see him when her eyes were never once turned in the direction of her window?

Now it is not every woman who looks pretty when she wakes in the morning; when one does it is her bounden duty not to waste her sweetness on the desert air. Perhaps this is why Mrs. Whitney sat so long motionless on her couch, buried in her thoughts. At any rate, she roused from them at last and took from under her pillow a photograph. At this she gazed long and steadily. Incidentally she turned it so it could be seen by anyone who might happen to be across the court. Finally she kissed it.

And then, all of a sudden, she happened to look out of her window. Instantly she discovered a man in the room across the court. An expression of annoyance showed on her face. She leaned forward and caught hold of the shade cord. Then a flash of recognition came into her eyes. In the very act of pulling down the shade she paused. Then recognition gave way to astonishment and astonishment to something kinder. Her face softened and her eyes grew tender until in a moment she was gazing at her sleeping husband with an expression that boded ill for the fees of the divorce lawyers.

Finally, as if struck by a sudden thought, she threw herself back on

her pillow, threw her arm over her eyes, feigned sleep and lay watching her husband.

"It's up to me," said Whitney to himself. "Now, what shall I do? She's lying there watching me and waiting for me to act. She knows I know she's watching. She's been awake before and seen me perform for her benefit, though she's pretending to be watching now for the first time. I know she knows I know she's watching. I suppose I can take my choice—act on her actual knowledge or her pretended knowledge. In one case I've already performed; in the other I'm still to show my feelings. I'm going to win her back if it takes all Summer. I'll——"

Rap! rap! rap!

It was the porter knocking on his door and calling him for the morning train.

"All right," cried Whitney, opening his eyes and sitting up. "I'm awake. Tell the clerk I've changed my mind. I'm not going on the morning train."

Then Whitney turned and held out his arms to his wife across the court.

"Randolph, dear, I've got a confession to make. I—I was awake before."

"I know it, sweet. And I'll confess, too. I was awake first of all."

"Are you very sure?"

"Oh, yes. It was mean of me, but I had the advantage of you all the time. It doesn't matter now, though; does it, dear?"

"No, indeed. But I do wish you hadn't seen me put your picture under my pillow."

"Why—I—I don't—you don't mean——"

"And—oh, Randy, I was so afraid I'd wake you when I pushed my couch up to the window!"



TAKEN AT THE FLOOD

By Beulah Downey Hanks

Idlewild, June 16.

MY DEAR BONNIE: I arrived here last night, and true to my promise, send you the first eloquent words from my pen. Idlewild is a beautiful place; I never pictured it half so enchanting, and I expect to pass a delightful Summer. We are about a mile from the city, away from the dust and far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. Caroline and Mr. Hallett met me with their splendid turnout. The horses are beauties, and your sister felt like a queen as we rolled along the broad streets, even if that little old five-dollar bill did constitute her worldly goods.

The house is perfectly appointed and very satisfying. I feel more at home in it than I do at home, if you can understand such a paradox.

I find Caro little changed. She seems to be the same dear girl as when we were at school together. Mr. Hallett is a gentleman all over, decidedly plain and easy to get acquainted with; at least I found him so. Caro is supremely happy. He adores her, and having an unusual amount of this world's treasure, has no trouble in expressing his gigantic affection. It is ludicrous that he should make such a goddess of Caroline—Caroline who in the days that are no more faltered by the wayside as early as fractions, and who never mastered the intricacies of an ill-fated waltz of Chopin's that fell to her lot, and which for four years she so cheerfully and so conscientiously slaughtered. He really worships her, and she accepts the adoration with the most beautiful resignation imaginable.

Dear little Bonnie, how heartless and cruel it was of me to come off this way and leave you to the same old grind! How cold-blooded those good friends of ours must have thought me when I spent the last hoarded penny for those vanities of vanities, and flew away from the sordid life like a frivolous butterfly, while you remained to wear the loathsome calicoes and to work your little body to death!

You, of course, from the bottom of your dear, fond heart, thought it was all meet and proper, and no idea of my monstrous selfishness dawned on you as you helped me pack the dainty silk-lined gowns, the picture hats and all the other folderol. But, Bonnie, on my word of honor, this time there was method in my madness; those lovely confections are my armor, and no man can withstand their charm. Do you understand? I have decided to marry for money, to embark on the treacherous sea of matrimony, and nothing on earth can deter me from so doing.

Don't drop a tear for me, but look at the matter philosophically. I am sick of flirting, illusive love-making—tired of sowing for others to weep, and all that sort of thing, and now that I have declared war I'll select a suitable party and make the campaign both quick and decisive; then you and I will both bid good-bye to poverty and its wormwood. Before I left home I thought everything over carefully. I am convinced now is the time to strike for liberty. I am twenty-four; it cannot be long, under the most favorable conditions, until I'll be twenty-five—ah, it is bitter

medicine to count the years! If I delay longer I may turn into one of those awful bachelor maids, and the selection will not be left entirely to me in the end.

When I think of having a great house like this, with servants and fine horses, and all the luxuries, and above all *you* with me to enjoy it, why, it becomes a small thing indeed to marry for money. After this lengthy explanation my heedless extravagance must certainly be forgiven.

Everything came through in excellent order, with only the sea foam green organdie a little crumpled and the flowers on my white gauze slightly crushed. Caro thinks my outfit perfect; she says all my dresses are dreams of loveliness, and so they are, if I do say it who should not. She admires especially the black net over the turquoise silk. No bride ever had a more satisfactory trousseau than I possess this Summer.

We will have a gay time for the next few weeks, with receptions, dances and card parties. Caro is going to have a german, which will be the event of the season. I expect to lead it with Mr. Hallett's brother, who is looked for almost any day now. He finished college about two years ago, though he didn't graduate; Mr. Hallett says he was all ready to, but with his accustomed irregularity failed to reach the goal. He is twenty-six; I am sorry he isn't thirty—men of that age are so much more interesting.

Caro says that he is elegant—nearly as nice as her beloved. I am glad he is distinguished looking, and then I haven't overlooked the fact that he is to have possession of quite a snug little sum of money.

It seems nice to be in a house where there is no skeleton. Everybody around here is apparently happy. Caro is always candid; she could not dissemble if she would.

I must go to bed now and get my beauty sleep. With deepest love,

Yours for matrimony,

CAPRICE.

II

Idlewild, June 25.

BONNIE, MY LOVED SISTER: I wish you wouldn't write such sad little letters about love in a cottage, of how contented you are when I am there, and of other uncanny things. My child, that is all fiction. You are working on your vivid imagination.

It is nice of you, Bonnie, to say I don't look more than eighteen. I think myself I don't show my age very much. At the same time I don't care to be taken for superficial eighteen, that shallow, shallow age.

You say you are anxious to know what I am doing, so I shall plunge right into the subject. Yesterday we attended a large reception at Mrs. Grant's. The flowers and the music were divine, the dresses and the diamonds were gorgeous, but the crowd was hideous, and struck terror to the bravest heart. I feel sure it was an "I. O. U." I always look on such things as direct insults.

And oh, Bonnie, a callow youth upset a dish of ice cream on my blue crêpe, and it is ruined. Nothing will take it out; we have worked for hours and hours on it, yet all to no purpose. Why do they let children out of the nursery so soon? And aside from destroying one's clothes, youngsters like that can do a marriageable young woman an awful lot of damage. You know how they forever hang round and keep desirable men away, and I invariably have the misfortune to have one dangling at my side. He has showered his attentions on me for some days—his mother says he is completely fascinated—that he has never cared for anyone else. I should hope not, at his age. He is so idiotic, he raves over my golden hair, my star-bright eyes and my lily skin till he fairly nauseates me. Yet he is such a boy! The disparity in our ages is appalling; I don't care to take a boy to raise and be the laughing-stock of the place. He cannot be more than twenty, and that is stretching it, I think. Imagine it, Bonnie—

twenty and twenty-four! Horrible! horrible!—I groan in spirit.

But I must not borrow trouble; I will have no infant prodigies hanging round when young Mr. Hallett comes. He has been unavoidably delayed for a few days longer.

You remember I told you there was no skeleton in this house. Well, I have detected a tiny little bone to-day. Caro told me some things about Ford Hallett, Mr. Hallett's brother.

About two years ago, while he was in New York, he fell in love with a chorus girl, and has been under a cloud with his relations ever since—that is to say, the relations are somewhat strained. You'd understand it better if you knew the family. They are the essence of pride, with regular peacock-blue blood in their veins; besides, they have a long line of ancestors to look to. I am glad *we* have such a good old name; it is a mighty factor in this household. Mrs. Hallett, Sr., so Caro says, is the proudest one in the family, and she has mourned over her son's love affair terribly; in fact, still watches him like a hawk. She must have a great deal of character, for when she heard of the reckless fellow's infatuation for the poor little *danseuse* she put on her hat and started for New York post-haste. And what a scene there must have been! Caro says Ford is stubborn and hard to do anything with, and the mother's determination is also superlative. She raved and tore her hair while her idolized darling laughed in her face. Now when Mrs. Hallett, Sr., found she could do nothing with him she did not give up, nor did she despair, but she went to the ballet girl and threw her blue blood and the mighty honor of her ancestors at her slippered feet and begged for mercy.

Caro said when Mrs. Hallett saw the girl she felt sorry for Ford, and her own heart was stirred, for she was a beautiful little thing, but of course she gained strength to resist her charms when she thought of the tights, and the spangled illusion skirts, and the vague rumors of innumerable champagne suppers.

Caro said Ford never knew his mother had that interview with Lolita, and when he went to the train to see her off he was fearfully defiant, vowing he would not give up his sweetheart even if his family never looked at him again. Mrs. Hallett, Sr., held her peace and kissed him good-bye in a most tender way.

One day, a few weeks after, he came home with a white face and hollow eyes, and told his mother Lolita had thrown him overboard, and he would never trust another woman as long as he lived. So much for diplomacy. Caro says—of course she wouldn't care to have me repeat it to an outsider—that he has always shown "low tendencies;" he is the only one in the family who isn't an aristocrat to the bone.

When Ford was somewhere in the neighborhood of seventeen he went to a fort to visit his uncle, who was a general or something big in the army. After he had been there about a week he fell violently in love with a soldier's daughter. This was an intolerable thing and not to be countenanced for a minute. Mrs. Hallett, Sr., was summoned immediately and very soon put a quietus on that youthful romance.

And now, Bonnie, I have decided to marry him; it will be a great relief to his mother, and Caro says if I can only bring it to pass she will be the happiest mortal living. Mr. Hallett says he'll remember me generously, too, for Ford has annoyed him world without end.

I am sorry Lolita has such liquid midnight eyes when mine are gentian blue; I am sorry she has such quantities of raven tresses when mine are yellow; I am sorry she is a graceful little tropical bird when I am tall and regal, and of the frigid zone. But a sweetheart is one thing, and a wife—well, that's different.

Don't think I shall treasure this story up against Mr. Ford Hallett. Not I. It happened long ago; besides, I have always admired men who have a history, they are so much more interesting than the other kind.

No doubt Ford and I will some day exchange confidences; perhaps I can dig up something equally amusing.

The "Boy" sent me lots of flowers this afternoon. They are beautiful. He certainly has faultless taste, but alas, they cannot take the awful greasy shadow of the ice cream off of my dress. Caro says he is madly in love with me. Most absurd Caro! Heigh-ho! twenty and twenty-four!

Pray for my success with the idol of the "House of Hallett."

Yours with love and great expectations,

CAPRICE.

P. S.—You will find my home letter enclosed.

III

Idlewild, July 5.

BONNIE, Ford Hallett is here. He came last night and I was ready for him. I had on my sea-foam green organdie and my white hat crowned with the exquisite plumes, and Caro said Ford could not take his eyes off me. He is very handsome. Tall, broad-shouldered, with dark hair and mustache, and the most fascinating eyes I ever looked into. I am glad I've decided to marry him; if this were not the case I should be an unhappy girl indeed, for I am more taken with him than any man I ever met. Caro says we look as if we were made for each other. This I consider a good omen. You think I am joking, but I was never more serious in my life.

Somehow I keep thinking of poor little Lolita. Her heart must have bled to have given up such a lover as this. No doubt she has found another by now. I am wearing all my prettiest clothes and looking my best, I think.

Last evening it was chilly, and so I put on my gray dress and gray toque. What an artistic combination that dress is, with its white satin and chiffon trimmings! It makes one think of a silver seagull.

We took a long drive, Ford and I.

As we drove along I thought to myself, "Bonnie has been ironing the whole blessed day, and now she is resting on the front steps with a tired little white face," and that thought nerved me on to victory.

We had a heavenly time; the evening was perfect, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. He did one thing, however, I did not fancy; when we were in the city he insisted on stopping at a street corner—and one of the principal ones at that—to listen to the Salvation Army rant for nearly a half-hour. I was provoked, exceedingly so, but I didn't say anything; it is just a trifle too soon to bring in complaints. He seemed to be greatly taken with the captain; she really was quite pretty and had a remarkably sweet voice, but he showed a frightful lack of something when he remarked he thought those ugly poke bonnets were beautiful. I can read him through as I would an open book; as a matter of fact, he was teasing me. Coming home he was charming. He is the kind of man who knows exactly what to say and the right moment to say it. He said he felt he had known me all his life; that perhaps we had met in some bright star in the long ago, and he vowed never to forget how I looked when he first saw me in the green dress with the pink rose at my belt. Bonnie, that is what they all say, but they don't all say it as he does. His manner is magnetic in the extreme. When we reached home he helped me out in the most graceful way, and as I walked slowly toward the house I was still under the spell of his dark eyes.

What was my disgust to see the "Infant" sitting on the porch, looking forlorn and dejected, and he had an enormous box of candy for me—chocolates, Bonnie, the kind you love. I felt like boxing his ears and sending him home, for a scheme had been forming in my mind to sit on the porch in the moonlight with Mr. Hallett. I think a girl is always at her best in the moonlight. But the boy has an angelic face, the sort to incite sympathy. He resembles a picture I

once saw of a young man who took the part of St. John in the Passion Play; moreover, you know my failing, how hard it is for me to resist admiration, so I stopped a moment to let him bask in the light of my smiles. And then he took advantage of me and did a thing I can never forgive—he invited me to go driving with him to-night. Now, the loss of one evening perhaps seems trivial to an outsider, but it is vital that I should have every minute to devote to Ford Hallett; he may not stay here long, or I may have to leave, or a thousand unforeseen events may occur. Caro was trying to entertain the love-lorn swain, but she said it was a herculean task—he was inconsolable. He is too unsophisticated to observe the yawning gulf of years stretching between us. I must get rid of him some way; however, it is a pretty poor sort of girl who cannot manage these small affairs. Oh, I don't intend to hurt his feelings; I'll deal gently with the boy. I've got to dispose of him, though. Mayhap he'll get the measles or the whooping cough.

Caro expects to give her german next week. Ford and I will lead it. I intend to wear my white gauze dress; he cannot resist its entrancing beauty, and will be compelled to surrender.

You will find my usual paternal letter enclosed. I think father can find no flaw in it.

Your devoted

CAPRICE.

IV

Idlewild, July 14.

I FOUND your letter at my place on the breakfast table—such a dear, sweet letter, just like Bonnie. There was a fragrant bunch of violets with it. Such chivalrous attentions touch my heart even as they touched the heart of the lamented Lolita.

What a lot of good advice you have sent me! I note what you say about flirting, you straitlaced Puritan; you think even a mild flirtation is a blot

on a fair maiden's name. And it is exactly like you to be more taken with my *bête noire* than with the man I am going to marry. It is your tender heart that finds you invariably on the hopeless side. His name is Robin Carey, a nice name, and suits him so well. It is *boys* in general I object to and not this one in particular. As to flirting, don't you know when a man has a heart it is constructed on an entirely different plan from a girl's? From reliable sources I learn that most men are heartless. Ten men have proposed to me, Bonnie, within the last few years—I do not refer to this conceitedly, but only to prove to you by results that my theory is not without personal proof. Nine of these men, who to all appearances were madly in love with me, are now settled in comfortable homes, dwelling in bliss with adored wives. And the other one, you know, is dead from natural causes. I used to think in days gone by if I could find one man who I thought would blow out his brains for love of me I would marry him. I have changed immeasurably of late. I don't believe Ford Hallett would blow his brains out for a soul on earth; he's got too much sense for that.

When I made up my mind to marry for money I never dreamed fate would send me such a desirable lover. I promise you I'll flirt no more.

I hardly know what to tell you first, so many things have happened. . . .

I am so sorry, Bonnie. I have only just started this letter, and Caro wants me to go driving. I haven't told you a thing. We are on the go every blessed minute. I'll wait until I get home, and then we will have cozy talks all about everything. I never could write when I am visiting.

I am glad father enjoyed my letter. How good he is! I don't see how he happened to be my father.

Ford Hallett has many of the symptoms; he is absent-minded, has little appetite, and takes lonely walks by moonlight.

You see, being in the same house, we are thrown constantly together,

and if we are not engaged before many days have flown it will not be due to negligence on my part.

Caro sends love to you, and says for me to hurry, the horses are restless.

Spasmodically but affectionately,
CAPRICE.

V

Idlewild, August 3.

MY WELL-LOVED BONNIE: At last the german is a thing of the past, and it was a grand success. I am so tired I can hardly hold a pen, but I must tell you it was enchanting. Ford was so attentive, and he was magnificent, the most distinguished-looking man here. I was the envy of every girl in the house. My cup of happiness was brimful, even if the irrepressible Robin Carey did hover persistently in the background. Everybody seems to admire him so much. All evening he gazed at me as an accusing angel might. Great heavens, what have I done! His mother treats me coldly, too. The world has come to a pretty pass if a girl cannot pick out the man she intends to marry.

Caro wore an exquisite gown from Paris. It was a surprise from Mr. Hallett. He is a king among husbands. The dress was a heavy white silk embroidered in gold and trimmed with real lace. It was the handsomest thing of the kind I have ever seen. She was quite imposing, and looked better than ever before.

My simple white gauze became me well. I was completely satisfied with it, but oh, Bonnie, is it not enough to try the patience of a saint?—*that boy* stepped on it, and the mutilation was awful; it is simply wrecked. If his mother doesn't melt and act a little less icy I'll send in a bill for damages. Ford says it would be perfectly justifiable. He was furious when he saw my dress, and called Robin a very hard name, and Robin looked at Ford as if he would like to kill him.

I am tired and sleepy, and cannot think. I am afraid you will not be able to decipher this letter.

Last night, after the guests had one and all departed, Caro and Mr. Hallett, Ford and I talked for nearly an hour; we reviewed everybody, what they wore and what they said. It sounds uncharitable, I know; at the same time it is such fun to haul the victims over the coals after an event of this kind.

Caro said she couldn't understand how Robin Carey had got so awkward all of a sudden; she claims he never was before. She feels sorry about my dress. Mr. Hallett lays the awkwardness entirely at my door, for he thinks the young man is so much in love with me that he cannot see. He says the first time he met his wife he distinguished himself by dropping a Welsh rarebit in her lap. But ancient history doesn't help this case. When I announce my engagement no doubt it will bring him to his senses.

Things are getting serious, my own dear little sister. At the foot of the stairs Ford clasped my hands, and with a very white face said he wanted to tell me something. I flew to dreams of love-lit eyes. You remember when we were wee girls, how I saved my cake and apples as long as I could before I would eat them? I am the same about this.

Yours wearily and happily,
CAPRICE.

The fireside letter enclosed.

VI

Idlewild, August 12.

MY DEAR BONNIE: This household is topsy-turvy, and all the members are furious. Mr. Ford Hallett, the Philistine, is desperately in love with the captain of the Salvation Army. He confessed to Caro, and the kind-hearted Caro sent for Mrs. Hallett, Sr., immediately; in fact, she is here now, and overcome by the blow. She declares he will bring her to the grave yet. Of course you are wondering what can be the objection to a Salvation captain. It is hard to make anyone understand it. Nevertheless, I do perfectly. Mrs. Hallett is a worldly

woman, also an ambitious one. It makes little chills run down her aristocratic back to hear him rave around; he vows he will don a red coat, take a big drum, march through the streets and make a great ado, if she says another word. I verily believe he is capable of such a performance.

I am not supposed to know anything about this; at least *he* thinks I don't. Oh, Mr. Ford Hallett is an accomplished flirt. He is still threatening to tell me what's on his mind. A great many things have dawned on me since Caro found out the devious "goings on." Why, every time we went to drive, which was almost daily, he insisted on going down where the Salvation Army was, where he would camp and gaze at that pretty captain; he would be quiet all the blessed time she was speaking, and when she sang he never answered a question I asked him. I doubt if he heard a word I said. Oh, yes, I see a great many things, and I presume his "low tendencies" will kill his poor mother in the end. But she says he is very susceptible, and thinks if she can separate them all will be smooth. She claims that he was just as set over the soldier's daughter, and acted insanely when Lolita deserted him. I should think she would feel guilty when she remembers what part she played in the desertion. Caroline says they all look to me for help in this trying hour.

But I assure you, Bonnie, after giving the matter due deliberation, I have come to the conclusion it would be a risky business to marry him. You see, his "low tendencies" might crop out any time; he might fall in love with the second girl, or his typewriter, or some vaudeville queen. I'd have to be on the watch constantly. Besides, I don't believe he has much of a fortune, anyway; it looks to me now as if his mother has a hand in it. I'd hate to be at her mercy. However, the next time he desires to tell me something I am going to insist on his relieving his mind.

I am about discouraged. It has been a pretty expensive campaign. My clothes are sadly damaged. Robin

Carey took me driving the other day—the second time I have gone with him—and though the clouds were heavy when we started, he drove so far we could not reach shelter before the rain came down in torrents, consequently my green dress is like a rag and my white hat a sight to behold. And there is a large hole in the heel of every single silk stocking I have. Silk stockings are the most perishable objects on this earth. As I said before, it has been an expensive campaign, and furthermore, I am convinced that clothes play a very small part in the mind of Mr. Ford Hallett, if a woman in a hideous bonnet and a shabby old blue serge dress has conquered his heart.

The Boy brought me a present this afternoon, a most extraordinary heart set with diamonds; it must have taken his pin money for quite a while. I suppose after all the havoc he wrought he wanted to get even in some way. When he asked me if I would accept it, I said "Oh, certainly!" just as if I had always been in the habit of accepting diamond hearts from everybody. Wouldn't dear father be shocked! He said he would like to have some sentiment engraved on the back of it, and I hummed, softly, "Twenty and twenty-four."

Later: Caro came in while I was writing, so I stopped for a few minutes. She thinks my heart is beautiful, but has taken my breath away. She says Robin Carey is worth a million dollars if he is worth a cent. If the heart *did* cost five hundred dollars, as she seems to think, I must return it, though it rend my soul. He is a dear boy, Bonnie. He has one of those open, readable faces—if a person were picking out a brother it would be impossible to find a better design.

I think I'll come home, sister mine; the family is so much upset over Ford, and I am disgusted with him also. You know I never did care for family wrangles.

Yours with fond love and vain regrets,

CAPRICE.

VII

Idlewild, August 20.

BONNIE, Bonnie, "there is a tide in the affairs of men." The strangest thing has happened to me—I am engaged to my boy lover! I've got rid of him, as I said I would.

I wish you could have heard him propose! Such a burst of eloquence it swept me off my feet. I was powerless before such adoration. And Bonnie, he swore he would kill himself if I wouldn't be his wife, and good gracious, his face showed he had nerve enough to do it. I never saw such a set mouth on a human being, and I feared he might have a concealed weapon on his person, so I said "YES." I didn't care to sail under false colors. I told him I was poor as a church deacon, all about the numerous interesting members of our large family, father's struggles and your blessed unselfishness. This avowal only fired him to new eloquence. I found out I could start on the million dollars whenever I was so disposed. After he got calmed down a little I spoke of the difference in our ages. I couldn't look into his eyes and be other than truthful.

When I made this confession he was shocked beyond measure to think I could be so mistaken. He is twenty-eight years old. Just heavens, how can anyone look so young and be so old, so very old! It is his smooth, frank face, together with the way he dresses, for he is several inches taller than I am. Since I have promised to be his I have found out a good many things: one is, he has traveled the wide world over; another, that he speaks five or six languages. How can anyone know so much and disguise it so admirably? His boundless money is an assured thing; his father is dead, and he left him the bulk of his large fortune. You should see my engagement ring—Caro has nothing so large or so handsome.

Dearest little sister, I am coming home; my mission on earth is ended, and we will plan for the wedding.

Mine, dear, must necessarily be a quiet one, as our funds have ebbed low, but yours shall be the most brilliant event ever witnessed; moreover, in the home of Mrs. Robin Carey.

Caro is delighted with the turn of affairs. She couldn't understand why I was so indifferent to the prize that all the other girls in this vicinity had striven so heroically to obtain. But she thought I had fallen under the witchery of the irresistible Ford, and of course longed to make a match between us if possible. She says, however, he is a pauper beside Robin. She laughed when I explained matters.

My heart feels a little sad when I think how good, how very good Robin is to me, and how much I am to him. This is the reaction, the inevitable remorse. I have never felt so toward anyone before—perhaps this is the awakening of that wealth of love you think I have hidden away in my heart. There, now, I do not want to be maudlin or sentimental.

I'll let you know in my next letter at what time I am coming home. Caro doesn't want me to leave yet, but since Ford fell from grace this is not the heaven it was.

Robin sends love to his sister that is to be. Bonnie, you will adore him.

In sweet contentment,

CAPRICE.

Afterthought—I wonder what father will think.

VIII

Idlewild, September 1.

MY DEAREST BONNIE: I leave for home next Wednesday. Lately, by some hook or crook, I seem to have got into paradise or some other place equally comfortable. I believe Robin Carey is responsible for it. There never was another Robin Carey, and there will never be any happiness for me away from him.

You who know me better than I do myself must realize what it means for me to acknowledge that.

I wonder if I can make you understand. The soldier's daughter, the fair Lolita and the Salvation captain turned out to be one and the same. *That* was what Ford Hallett wanted to tell me. You see, he thought I might help him to bring a happy ending to his troubles. He will never know what designs I had on him. You are the only person who knows, my trusted little oyster.

It appears Lolita left the stage so he would lose all trace of her, and she judged wisely. He did, though at no time did he relinquish the hope of finding her. In fact, he didn't give up his love for her from the minute he saw her face, years ago.

She had a frightful time to keep from starving to death, and finally drifted into the Salvation Army. The first evening Ford went driving with me he heard her voice. He said he thought he was dreaming, and then, alas! he saw her, and it was all up with him again. To think I never knew of the wild tumult that raged in his heart that day!

As I recall it now I remember how charmingly she raised the tambourine over her head, how archly she looked when she sang, how fearlessly and divinely she prayed.

Lolita was here at the house for a few days. She is beautiful, there isn't a question of that—positively bewitching, and don't you breathe it, she seemed more refined to me than Mrs. Hallett, Sr. Robin thought so, too. Poor girl! her life has been pathetic enough for a popular novel.

Now they are married—forgiven, and to-day are crossing the deep blue

sea on their way for a brief honeymoon. Truly Ford Hallett has fulfilled the promises of his boyhood; but no doubt this will end his "low tendencies." May they live happy forevermore! I hope Robin will be as devoted and true to me.

And now Mrs. Hallett, Sr., says Lolita was adopted by the soldier's wife. Take that with a grain of salt; at the same time, who knows but she may have royal blood in her veins? When I come home I'll tell you all about it.

Robin insists on an early day. I shouldn't wonder if he followed me on the next train. His mother is lovely to me and can't do enough for my pleasure.

Robin just came in—how my hand shakes! He brought you a beautiful present—guess what it is!

We shall go abroad for two years. His tastes are identical with mine. How could I have been so mistaken? Think what I might have missed! I have a helpless sort of feeling that his money didn't cut so much figure in the match, after all. I wonder if it did?

I don't believe any girl ever had so many flowers; he sends me exquisite white roses every day. I think it is lovely to be the first sweetheart, and he says it is loveliest to be the last.

My trip has been all that anyone could desire. Be sure and meet me at the train.

Yours with deepest and fondest love,

CAPRICE.

I wonder if we can reconcile father to prosperity.



TIGHT ENOUGH BEFORE

DOLLY—I shall have to get a new bathing suit made.

MADGE—Why so, dear?

DOLLY—Since I came here I have gained two pounds.

ROSES

NOT the bright petals of Provençal bloom
 Which the enamored troubadours once poured
 At courts of Love before those they adored;
 Not the resplendent blossoms that illumé
 The ruined fanes of once renowned Fayûm;
 Not the flower-flames Damascus gardens hoard,
 Wherein is such a wealth of attar stored;
 Not English roses heavy with perfume!

Nay, none of these my fancy captivates;
 Rather the blossoms of the climbing vine
 She tends and trains with such a loving care.
 Their modesty her shy demureness mates;
 Upon her cheeks their tender crimsons shine,
 And round her hovers their sweet, wilding air!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



TROUBLES OF THE RICH

MRS. PARVENUE—The reason we stay longer in the country, my dear,
 is because your papa is beginning to make so much money.

GEORGIE—Say, ma, do you think we'll ever get so high-toned that we will
 have to stay in the country till it's cold enough to freeze you?



APPROPRIATE TO THE SEASON

SUB-EDITOR—I like the style of this writer; his story has quite a swing
 to it.

EDITOR—Then we'd better publish it with our hammock literature.



CERTAIN TO BE DISCREDITED

DOCTOR—This inactive life is killing you. What you need is excitement.
 Why don't you take an interest in public affairs?

PATIENT—Because everybody would call me a hypocrite if I said I was
 in politics for my health.

LE COMMISSIONNAIRE

Par S. Boucherit

LE cabinet de travail de René Langlois, avocat. Son visage, grave comme celui d'un travailleur, est éclairé par deux grands yeux bleus limpides et bons et égayé par un sourire gracieux et tendre. Sous l'homme de labeur, on devine un homme à l'âme sentimentale, au cœur délicat.

René Langlois vient d'atteindre la trentième année.

Maurice Pringeot, son visiteur et son ami—même âge—est tout autre: il est mis à la dernière mode, un gardénia à la boutonnière, les moustaches en crocs conquérants, ciré, pommadé, musqué, beau parleur, exubérant, vaniteux, plein de lui-même, n'interrompant son verbiage que pour donner dans la glace de fréquents coups-de-œil et vérifier si l'équilibre de sa coiffure, l'harmonie de sa cravate et les plis réguliers de son irréprochable veston ne sont en rien dérangés. L'entretien des deux amis, commencé depuis quelque temps déjà, continue.

MAURICE—Oui, mon cher vieux, voilà la mission de confiance que je demande à ton amitié de remplir.

. . . Est-ce dit?

RENÉ—C'est bien délicat. Il me semble que, dans un cas pareil, le mieux serait d'agir par soi-même. Si tu aimes sincèrement Mme. Dancourt . . .

MAURICE—Je ne l'aime pas du tout. Je la veux pour femme, oui. Mais c'est bien loin d'être la même chose. Cette jeune veuve, qui du reste n'est pas mal du tout, a surtout à mes yeux un mérite exceptionnel: une très belle fortune. Je ne me soucie qu'à moitié d'aliéner ma liberté pour une femme, même jolie, mais j'y consens pour vingt-cinq mille francs de rente.

RENÉ—Tu sais, mon cher Maurice, que je n'envisage pas du tout le mariage comme toi.

MAURICE—Une association?

RENÉ—Non, l'union de deux âmes!

MAURICE—Justement, c'est parce que je sais que tu cultives le "bleu" avec passion que tu ne vois dans deux époux que deux pigeons destinés à roucouler jusqu'à la fin de leurs jours avec la permission de M. le maire, que je te charge de peindre ma flamme à Mme. Dancourt. On m'a dit que c'était une femme dans ton genre, une rêveuse, une sentimentale, une éthérée. C'est un terrain si nouveau pour moi que je ferais, en y marchant tout seul, certainement des bêtises! Tandis que toi, tu pinceras de la guitare, tu chanteras une romance d'amour, au besoin tu lui diras des vers! Tout cela pour mon compte et sans que j'aie à me fatiguer. Et quand tu me l'auras ainsi conquise, j'entrerais en scène, et je ferai la reste!

II

RENÉ (*seul*)—Me voilà bien! Comment ai-je été assez sot pour promettre à ce fou de Maurice ce qu'il me demandait? Aller dire à Mme. Dancourt qu'il l'aime et solliciter sa main pour le compte de M. Maurice Pringeot! Mais c'est abominable, c'est insensé! . . . D'abord, je mentirai impudemment, puisqu'il m'a déclaré qu'il ne l'aimait pas du tout et que c'était pour sa dot seule. . . . Quelle horreur! . . . Puis, il me faudra vanter ses qualités. . . . Et où sont-elles, ces qualités? . . . Alors, je devrai lui en prêter qu'il n'a pas! . . . C'est de l'escroquerie! . . . Tromperie sur la qualité de la mar-

chandise vendue! . . . Le cas est prévu et puni par le Code pénal pour les échanges commerciaux, et ici c'est bien autrement grave! . . . Je vais induire en erreur une honnête femme qui s'imaginera qu'elle peut avoir confiance en moi . . . et je ferai le malheur de sa vie! . . . C'est odieux!

Aussi vais-je dire à Maurice que je ne ferai pas la démarche qu'il m'a demandée. . . .

Pourtant, j'ai promis! . . . Un honnête homme n'a qu'une parole! . . . Et puis, ce pauvre Maurice, il a l'air de tant désirer ce mariage! Sa situation, qu'il a bien compromise, sera refaite ainsi. En outre, il est, je le sais, sur une mauvaise, très-mauvaise pente, entraîné, j'en suis sûr, plus que corrompu . . . mais enfin il dégringole! . . . Or, Mme. Dancourt est une femme de tête autant que de cœur. Elle l'arrêtera, elle le charmera, elle le ramènera au bien. En somme, c'est une bonne œuvre et une œuvre amicale que j'accomplirai!

Allons, bon! qu'est-ce que c'est que ça qui coule sur ma joue? . . . Une larme! . . . Oui, c'est vrai, il faut bien que je l'avoue: c'est dur pour moi ce que je vais faire!

Car, enfin, depuis longtemps, j'aime Mme. Dancourt! . . .

Juliette! . . . Mais non, je ne dois plus l'appeler Juliette, puisqu'elle va être la femme d'un autre! Et c'est moi qui ferai ce mariage! . . .

Mais il ne s'agit pas de s'attendrir! À quoi cela servirait-il? Puisque j'ai promis, il faut tenir! J'étais, d'ailleurs, dans une impasse sans issue, puisque jamais je n'aurais avoué mon amour. Elle se serait toujours mariée avec un autre! Autant vaut alors que ce soit avec Maurice.

Courage! Il me restera le travail! C'est le bonheur aussi!

III

CHEZ Mme. Dancourt. Salon coquet. Mme. Dancourt, très-jolie, sans minauderie, élégante dans sa grande simplicité, le visage aimable et ouvert, est

assise sur une causeuse en face de René Langlois, qui paraît tout embarrassé et tourne son chapeau dans ses doigts.

MME. DANCOURT—En vérité, cher Monsieur Langlois, vous avez quelque chose! Je ne vous reconnais plus aujourd'hui. Vous qui d'ordinaire parlez si simplement et si bien!

RENÉ—Oh! madame!

MME. DANCOURT—Ce n'est pas un compliment. Vous savez comme je suis franche. Très-sincèrement je trouve un charme extrême à vos entretiens. Jamais vous ne parlez de futilités comme tant d'autres; vos sujets sont toujours élevés et traités d'une façon si délicate! . . . Eh bien! aujourd'hui, vous restez coi. . . . Vous avez l'air d'un écolier intimidé. . . . On dirait que vous avez une déclaration à faire, et que vous n'osez pas. . . .

RENÉ—C'est qu'en effet j'ai une déclaration à vous faire.

MME. DANCOURT (*vivement*)—Une déclaration? . . . Eh bien! osez!

RENÉ—Madame, il y a au monde un homme qui vous aime. . . .

MME. DANCOURT (*baissant les yeux*)—Ah! . . .

RENÉ— . . . Qui vous aime et qui serait au comble de la joie, si . . . si vous le lui rendiez un peu!

MME. DANCOURT (*très-tendre*)—Rien qu'un peu?

RENÉ—Beaucoup l'enivrerait! . . . (*S'exaltant*) Oui, madame, cet homme a su apprécier tout ce qu'il y a en vous de grâce exquise, le charme incomparable de votre esprit, la tendresse qu'on sent déborder de votre cœur. Être votre mari, madame, unir sa destinée à la vôtre, confondre ses sentiments avec ceux si hauts, si suaves, qui vous animent, vous consacrer toutes ses pensées, tous les battements de son cœur, suivre la vie la main dans votre main, dans cette fusion des âmes qu'est le vrai mariage, tel qu'il doit être—quel rêve! . . . Un mot, dites un mot, et celui-là, le plus heureux des hommes, viendra tomber à vos pieds!

MME. DANCOURT (*émue*)—Écoutez, mon ami. Une autre ferait de la coquetterie, jouerait à l'étonne-

ment et, toute ravie qu'elle fût, prendrait des airs réservés et mystérieux. Moi, non. Je suis brutale dans ma sincérité. Ce que vous venez de dire me touche profondément et répond, je l'avoue, au vœu de mon cœur.

RENÉ (*calmé et un peu froidement*)—Ah! . . . Je ne savais pas. . . . Mais alors? . . .

MME. DANCOURT—Oui, c'est vrai. Mon pauvre mari, à son lit de mort, après quelques mois d'une union très douce et dont jamais mon cœur ne perdra le souvenir, a eu le courage de me conseiller, de m'ordonner presque de me remarier. Ma conscience est en repos sous ce rapport. Aussi j'ai laissé venir à moi les propositions, et je vous confesse qu'il en est venu plusieurs. Je n'en ai accepté aucune. Si j'admets l'idée d'une seconde union je la veux telle qu'était la première, avec une conformité complète d'idées et de sentiments; là seulement est le bonheur, parce que là seulement est la véritable communauté, source unique de tout bon ménage; là seulement—je dirai le mot—est l'amour!

Alors, j'ai attendu. . . . Oh! beaucoup m'ont fait des déclarations plus ou moins bien tournées. . . . Le seul qui ne m'en ait pas fait est précisément celui de qui j'aurais voulu l'entendre. . . . À celui-là j'aurais répondu . . . en lui tendant ma main, où j'aurais mis mon cœur.

(Elle lui tend la main. René la prend, mais la serre à peine et l'abandonne. Mme. Dancourt le regarde, étonnée.)

RENÉ (*se levant*)—Voilà ma mission remplie, madame. . . . Puisque vous m'avez compris si bien . . . et si vite, je crois que le mieux sera maintenant que cette affaire se traite directement entre les intéressés. J'ignorais que vos sentiments s'étaient déjà ainsi précisés et que j'allais livrer l'assaut à une place déjà prise. Excusez mon indiscrette intervention, je vous prie.

MME. DANCOURT—Que voulez-vous dire?

RENÉ—Mon rôle était déjà assez irrégulier et assez difficile. . . . Maurice aurait du moins bien fait de

m'avertir que la bataille était gagnée d'avance!

MME. DANCOURT—Maurice! . . . Qui ça, Maurice? . . . Nous ne nous comprenons pas, monsieur!

RENÉ—Maurice Pringeot, qui m'a prié de venir vous dire qu'il vous aimait et qu'il sollicitait votre main, que vous me paraissiez toute disposée à lui accorder.

MME. DANCOURT—Maurice Pringeot! . . . Cet égoïste vaniteux et sot, cette gravure de modes sans esprit et sans cœur, ce coureur de dots qui recherche, non ma personne, mais ma fortune, parce qu'il est à la côte! . . . C'est lui qui veut être mon mari? . . . Mais jamais de la vie . . . jamais! . . . Ah! c'est pour lui que vous parliez! . . . Pauvre sotte que je suis! j'avais cru . . .

RENÉ (*troubé*)—Qu'aviez-vous pu croire?

MME. DANCOURT—Rien . . . rien. . . .

(Elle porte son mouchoir à ses yeux.)

RENÉ (*très-ému*)—Vous pleurez?

MME. DANCOURT—Oui, je pleure de honte de penser que vous, vous qui me connaissez depuis longtemps, qui auriez pu comprendre que j'avais quelque chose dans la tête et dans le cœur, vous avez pu croire, fût-ce un instant, que je consentirais jamais à être la femme de cet être! . . . Voilà pourquoi je pleure! . . . Et aussi pour autre chose! . . . Allons, adieu, Monsieur Langlois! . . . Je ne vous en veux pas, mais vous m'avez fait beaucoup de mal!

(Elle s'effondre sur un fauteuil et sanglote.)

RENÉ (*essayant de se reprendre*)—Voyons, madame. . . . Pardonnez-moi ce que j'ai dit, et surtout pardonnez-moi d'insister encore! . . . Je vous assure que vous jugez trop sévèrement ce pauvre Maurice: il a des qualités . . . et entre vos mains, sous votre exquise influence . . .

MME. DANCOURT (*violemment*)—Oh! c'est trop! . . . Taisez-vous, par

pitié! . . . Entendre dire tout cela . . . par vous! . . . Non, non, tenez, allez-vous-en! . . . Je vous en prie! . . .

RENÉ—Je m'en vais, madame. . . . Puisque vous le voulez. . . . Mais je ne comprends vraiment pas . . .

MME. DANCOURT (*lui saisissant les deux mains*)—Vous ne comprenez pas? . . . Je vais vous faire comprendre! . . . Monsieur Langlois, après un quiproquo aussi douloureux, et puisque j'ai laissé échapper tout-à-l'heure mon secret, nous ne devons plus nous revoir. Sachez donc tout. Vous êtes assez loyal pour que j'espère que vous oublierez. . . . Eh bien! oui, j'aime . . . j'aime depuis longtemps . . . le seul homme, parmi tous ceux que j'ai vus, à qui j'aurais voulu donner mon existence et apporter le bonheur! . . . Je connaissais son intelligence, son cœur, et j'espérais, quoiqu'il ne m'eût jamais rien dit, qu'un jour peut-être . . . Tout-à-l'heure, quand vous m'avez parlé, j'ai cru que c'était pour lui que vous parliez. Et j'ai été heureuse, bien heureuse! Dans ma joie, j'ai livré mon secret . . . je vous ai dit que mon cœur était à lui, rien qu'à lui, tout à lui! . . . Mais, au lieu d'être vous-même, vous n'étiez que l'envoyé de ce Prin-geot!

RENÉ (*tremblant*)—Au lieu d'être moi-même? . . . Ai-je bien entendu? . . . (*Tombant à genoux*) Juliette! . . .

IV

LE CABINET DE RENÉ

RENÉ (*seul*)—C'est donc vrai! Un pareil bonheur est-il possible? Moi, moi, le mari de Juliette! Ce que je n'osais pas rêver! Et elle m'aime! et par une adorable intervention des rôles c'est elle qui m'a offerte cette félicité celeste . . .

(*Il s'interrompt.*)

Sapristi! . . . Et Maurice? . . . Qu'est-ce que je vais lui dire? . . . Comment lui raconter? . . . Je croyais faire un mensonge, et j'ai fait une félonie! . . . Mais non, après tout! J'ai plaidé sa cause! Seulement, j'ai perdu! . . . Cela m'arrive souvent au Tribunal, et si j'ai gagné la mienne, de cause, c'est bien sans le vouloir. . . . Et puis, du reste, chacun pour . . .

LE DOMESTIQUE (*entrant*)—Une lettre pour Monsieur.

RENÉ (*lisant*)—"Cher vieux, si tu n'as pas été chez Mme. D—, n'y vas pas. Je suis enchanté de t'éviter cette corvée. J'ai trouvé bien mieux! Huit cent mille francs de dot et des espérances! La fille d'un banquier! Un rêve! Comme femme, elle ne vaut pas Mme. D—, mais c'est l'accessoire; le principal, c'est la caisse! Je te raconterai tout cela. Sais-tu ce que tu devrais faire, toi? Épouse donc Mme. D—! Vous roucouleriez ensemble! Ce serait parfait! Veux-tu que j'aille lui parler pour toi? Tout à ton service.—MAURICE."



TO ERR IS HUMAN

CRAWFORD—Many of us know enough to believe only half what we hear.
CRABSHAW—But the trouble is that most of us believe the wrong half.



NEVER MISSED IT

GERALDINE—You lost your head when you were here last night.
GERALD—Well, I could spare it; I had yours on my shoulder.

WHISPERING PINES

By Fletcher Cowan

"I SAY, old chap," said the youngling at the end of the east porch to the elder who towered above him over the gambrel ridge, "do you like this Summer hotel?"

"I do not," snapped the elder, dropping a cone on the veranda roof for emphasis. "I'd move away from it to-morrow if I could."

"What offends you? I find things here quite interesting."

"Of course *you* do. In the first place, you are young," replied the Titan, crushingly. "In the next place, consider your altitude, compared with mine, and your limited range of vision. What do you see? The piazza and the reading-room, with a peep into the second-story parlor, and a bare one at that, from your corner position. Wait till you grow up, young man, and burgeon out until you command a whole façade of windows, as I do, and instead of finding things merely interesting, you'll find them too much so."

"Is that possible?"

"Quite. From your lower command of lawn and piazza you get nothing but the coqueties of young folk and the social platitudes of older fools making themselves strenuously agreeable to people they care nothing about. Here, above, I hold in survey the quarters where these people live and drop the mask, and I assure you, Pinette, far from it being merely interesting, I find it astoundingly absorbing."

"Then why do you wish to move away?" asked the youngling, innocently.

"Because," replied the patriarch,

"I feel it is not the true duty of a Pine to stand by and make a silent study of local color that is the rightful property of a Pinero. Shiver my fascicles, my mission is for nobler work than being either curious or ethical. I was born to wave my tuftings in the wind, to sigh and sigh in whimsey of its mood; upthrow my silhouette against the rising moon, and fret the glory of the sunsets that poets rave about."

"It would be well if you would keep to that," retorted the youngling, "without peeping into the threadbare domesticities that end in deflowering life of all its honey and romance."

The big Pine stretched his limbs with an affectation of weary superiority, and said:

"Cherish your dreams, my strippling—I can never make you remember that down there by the piazza you see only the agreeable side of everything. The stock-in-trade conventions of society apparently charm you: the bow and smirk, the saunter and the dawdle, with all the concomitant Gatling-fire of small talk. In the mornings, gentlemen in duck and flannel, looking as if they had been tailorized by Ratsey, promenade luminously in the sunshine with seraphim in organdie and batiste. It looks so sweet and simple to you. In the evenings, the black tuxedo escorts the cashmere or the camel's-hair, and the ladies pause in conversational dalliance under the particular colored lanterns that sympathize most kindly with their various types of beauty. The gentlemen blow rings of cigarette smoke that the ladies spear mischiev-

ously with their fans. Everything is so delightfully silly and amateurishly devilish. Then palm-screened musicians within strike up the dance, and swirls of chiffon float as in a dream, while fond mothers sit without in the rocking-chairs wondering whether this is the last Summer they will be forced to bring the same goods back to market. It is so beautiful and romantic. Think of the sweet sincerity of it all and of the sacred troths that, after the dance, will be plighted in orange phosphates at the village store, with 'Kismet' for the toast, and the heart's epigraph, 'Love forever and a day!'—especially a day!"

"Stop!" cried the youngling, indignantly; "you are trying to dethrone my ideals. I will not listen to you."

"It is not necessary that you should, my boy. An old man, Pinette, does not depend on a listener when he talks. He listens to himself and thinks his vaporings golden."

"You would have me believe there is no truth in love, no heart-and-soul affinity in joy. You and your friends, the Maples, may believe so, but I know better, and so does the Mountain Ash out there on the lawn. For years he has stood monitor beside yon arbor seat. He rears himself above it now all in the mellow light of afternoon, but at night, when the houselights fling shadow bars across the sward, he stands in an avenue of ink and possesses peculiar advantages for the study of heart spasms in their incipience. He assures me that love is love the wide earth over; that of all the cases that have come under his tutelage only one has failed to crown itself in marriage, and that was where the gentleman was suddenly ordered to rejoin the Asiatic Squadron and the girl hadn't imagination enough to fill up the void in his absence. He says, in brief, that love loves love, that all the world loves a lover, and that lovers talk sweeter rubbish than the birds!"

"Far be it from me," said the big Pine, icily, "to contradict a Moun-

tain Ash. I remember once having a decided difference of opinion with a Mulberry Bush, and, again, with a Virginia Creeper that tried to strangle me in my youth. I have occasionally a slight misunderstanding even with the Maples here, who sometimes, in their plebeian way, forget that I belong to the primeval aristocracy, and dispute my plume-rights. But for the Mountain Ash I have always had a deference and respect that justify me in characterizing anything it may say as the quintessence of twaddle, and if I could only get a whack at him with my Long Tom here I'd punish him for that insult to the birds. Listen! Do you hear that piano going in the parlor? That's that girl with the Psyche knot hammering away at 'Narcissus' again. Another insult to the birds."

The big Pine's manner now taunted the youngling into a feeling of insolent inquiry.

"You spoke about those windows you have command of. What do you see up there?"

"Ah! Really interested in something that pertains to my domain? I'll tell you. Confound that squirrel! He runs along the eaves here hour in and out and keeps my nerves on edge. Excuse those needles, please. They're from the sun corner. There's a leak in the flashing; and when I catch the drip old Sol comes out and moults me. Listen, and I will unfold to you my observations; and listen to them with attention, not with the condescension of a young man tolerating his father, for I'd have you know I'm no loblolly from the barrens, but a true descendant of the lords of Oregon. You must know that the architecture of this side of the house affects to be Colonial. I mention this because I once heard a wise guest say that every side was different. I won't describe the various styles of windows except to mention that one of them is a rose. This rose we may refer to later on. We'll look upon them all as frames revealing pictures. You

know the hour. It's five o'clock in the afternoon. You can always tell that, boy, by the long shadows that shoot across the tennis court. Don't forget that."

The youngling took the hint with the bored expression of a freshman. The big Pine resumed:

"The last brat in kilts has finished his race down the piazza, after the usual afternoon diversion of disturbing the siestas of his elders, and been called up by his governess to have his face washed. In short, people are now beginning to dress lavishly to go down to the supper, that will be first condemned because there is not enough of it, and afterward reviled as utterly unfit to eat, anyhow. Summer hotel guests are peculiar, you know. Using my gaze without impertinence, I see fair maidens pause during the interesting phases of their toilets to snap an extra chocolate wafer and chatter across transoms with their sisters about the eternal He. Young men of the age that is a little more than cigarette and less than brier root are stringing four-in-hands with the calm confidence of personal irresistibility, a satisfaction that has become to them almost monotonous. But we'll leave the inchoate and go to character. Now, I see in a certain window a man of forty-five who has fled town, not for his health, but to escape his relatives, which is the same thing. He is in mortal agony. All afternoon he has been tossing restlessly on his couch trying to read a novel by George Meredith, which the previous guest left behind, either through forgetfulness or fell design. He has jumped from the beginning to the end, from the end back to the beginning, and attacked it in the middle, working both ways, turning the book upside down for luck, without being able to determine yet whether it is a novel or a reflex of Professor Garner's monkey chatter. Later on he will tell his friends it is a great book and counsel them to read it. At present he starts up suddenly, hurls the book against the wall, lays the curse on his relatives and George, and

rises to dress. He opens his bag, for he bears all the evidence of a transient, and from the heart of many pink-striped, sleevy things that can be heard as well as seen he draws a white one, from which it is safe to infer that the gentleman's taste this evening runs more toward wearing the garb of the acolyte than that of the sporting man. Into the collarband of this poetic garment the gentleman seeks to insinuate a stud. Now, it is a well-known fact in kinetics that the symbol of unknown quantity is the collar stud. It is popcorn sublimated, without the slightest surrender of the popcorn's natural *esprit*. And there is the illustration! Out jumps the ubiquitous button, with a diamond pip at that, and true to tradition, rolls over the floor to keep its customary appointment under the bureau! Is the man swearing? I do not know, but down he is on all fours, and down he would be on twice the number of hands and feet if he had them, in rampant pursuit of the missing jewel; and ever and anon stertorous sounds escape him like the intermittent explosions of a locomobile. But at last he has wooed the fugitive from its covert and stands erect, proud in the conscious power of man over the treachery of things insensate, when—what do you think?—he drops it again! Now I know he is swearing. Even the lace curtains respond to the convulsion that is going on within."

"Well," said the youngling, impatiently, "I thought you were going to tell me something tragic instead of trivial."

"Isn't that tragedy? If not, what is? See here, young man, don't go through life with your mind distorted by the idea that it is only the shedding of gore, or the imminence of it, that makes drama. The Homeric instance I have given you aside, as fine a tragedy may be written on a bottle of milk as on a bucket of blood. Take the mother with her child. It's top gallery, I know, but that's because it's human. On the one side Herod and the slaughter of the innocents, on the other papa and the weary vigils

given to the proper conduct of the gas stove and the sterilizer! I say no more. Next to the window of Ulysses I see a spinster lady of fifty 'making ready' and putting into her work a conscience that shows she has not lost faith in the idea that she may yet arrive. How beautiful is faith!"

"Excuse me. But aren't you getting just a bit digressive?"

"Digression, my boy, is the sovereign privilege of age. It is its holiday. Where would be the inducement to live until my years unless I had the certainty that I could make myself mortally tiresome to my friends? Kindly do not interrupt me. At the next window frame is an interesting kit-kat of a man and his wife. The wife is arranging her hair, and the man his accounts, with a lead pencil. The man is in earnest converse with the wife, and the wife liketh not the tenor of his song, which is money and the reiterated citation of household expenses. These he dinneth industriously into the lady's ear, citing her as the grand extravagancer and himself as a martyr to penury and humbleness, while happy children dance around them, making both more miserable. Why will man take the rose-bloom off the lives of his nearest and dearest by the quotation of finance? I pause for a reply. So doth he, and getting none, straightway he hieth to a room contiguous, where patient bachelors, with colored chips and high-ball Scotch, await his coming. And there, seating himself again at the table, he raiseth the limit of the game."

"But——"

"You want something more pleasant, I know; but not just yet a bit. We're on the realistic now. Passing over the checker of frivolous women decking themselves for the evening's conquests, we come to a sad case. It is that of a once very successful man, who, ruined by unfortunate investments and down with the acutest form of nervous prostration, is having his last moments soothed by his wife, who is reading to him 'To Have and To Hold.'"

"Out on this evasive rubbish!" cried the youngling, desperately, "and stand by to explain your innuendoes. When you spoke of Pinero a little while ago, did you mean to hint that there were any Tanquerays or Ebbsmiths in this house?"

"Well, I won't say that exactly, but there's excellent stage material for the same. This brings me to the rose window I promised to refer to. I don't mind telling you now that I had intended to get out of mentioning it again, if possible, purely in deference to your feelings, but since you insist on knowing the worst, I don't see how I can deny you. You must know that the rose window opens from one of the corridors of the house. Its primary mission was to let in light. Its ultimate one has been to let out secrets. Now wait for the breeze, and when you blow up and I blow down, catch my confidence. In the room to the right of the rose a man is sprucing himself before a mirror, with the sole view of meeting in the evening another man's wife!"

"What!"

"I thought that would shatter you. And in the room to the left of the rose is the woman, lancing carnations through her hair; in other words, preparing to meet the man, who, by the way, is another woman's husband."

"I don't believe it!"

"I don't give a tinker's anathema whether you do or not. Now, piquancy aside—which has its relish, for, though I'm old, there's a tremor of the human left in me yet—isn't that an outrage?"

"If what you say is true, it is."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. And understand, my indignation is genuine. Now, if I were that man, I should probably be guilty of the same impropriety, for the lady is young and of surpassing beauty, and would justify any act of folly; but I always put myself in the deceived man's place, Pinette. Therefore, I tell you frankly if I were not he it would be delightful; but if I were, and scented the mischief, something would drop! Yet somehow this is a case to linger

over. The others I have cited have been rich in the nothing-doing quality of realism so dear to Mr. Howells; but here is a passion phase in the vein of Daudet or Halévy, whose books I've read so often as they lay on the piazza chairs, and I assure you this whole affair has, so far, been as neatly conducted as either of those masters would have treated it. I writhe with indignation and would stop the mischief if I could, but my artistic soul says, 'Watch it out. Study its flavor. Await the dénouement. Even help it along, so that, no matter how it end for them, society be not cheated of its sensation; for, in matters of this kind the public has its rights.' Oh, don't be frightened. There will be nothing sanguinary in the climax. In these days of civilization we no longer seek the shambles for redress but the balm provided by our good Pine sisters of South Dakota. Hold a moment! What do I see? My lady leaves her room and pauses in the hall. She takes a flower from her corsage and casts it through his fanlight with accuracy most unwomanlike. It is a signal. He, too, comes forth. They stand together in the corridor. I do hope they'll keep up the delicacy of the French school. She takes the flower from his hand and fixes it in his lapel. Ah, pretty!—very pretty! and—by heaven, Pinette, *he's kissed her!*"

With that the plumage of the big Pine leaped pompadour and the Pinette was almost uprooted by the vacuum.

"I'll not believe it!" cried the youngling, as his breath came back to him. "You play on my credulity. I cannot think so ill of human nature, because I know it's better. You see the world through yellow glass. I see with healthier vision. Now hear my tale. Only the other day a man paused here and carved on me the Christian initial of his sweetheart's name."

"I know the man. He struck a match on me."

"Consider that he honored you. That man is coming down the veranda now, and the woman of his heart is with him. Fair is she, and he graced with lordliness of figure. Oh, how they are in love! You wonder how I know so? I've watched them time and time again, and when a couple truly are in love it needs no Merlin's gift to read within their souls the light that never was on sea or land."

"That's remarkably fine language you are using. Is it your own?"

"I use the language of the human heart voicing its virgin impulse," replied the Pinette, with haughtiness. "The love I speak of is tender, sacred. Compare these lovers with those that you have pictured. It is the contrast of the spiritual and the material. Not theirs the reckless impulse of flaunting in the light of day the roll of goo-goo eyes. Those optic paroxysms are kept for their sweet privacy. So modestly they love, 'tis only after twilight that one hand seeks another, all in the singing hush of night when the call of the whippoorwill is heard in echo land."

"Beautiful! beautiful!"

"Then they sit here beneath me on the wattle chair, a-steep in shadow, living through eternities; just listening to the katydids; just gazing at the fireflies and thinking them forget-me-nots; just keeping busy with silent lip-laps, until his cigar goes out. Ah! it is beautiful, and beautiful because it is so honest and so pure! Such a tonic to think of after all that you have told!"

A breeze came up, and the big Pine, shaking down his pompadour, said in a kinder tone than any he had used before:

"You have in you the making of a good minor poet, Pinette, but a poor philosopher. Sorry to disillusionize you, but the couple in the wattle chair are the missing partners of the twain at the rose window."



BY POSTAL CARD

A LITERARY FLIRTATION

IT began by the literary girl sending what she thought was a joke to the editor of the comic monthly.

He promptly returned it with a single word scrawled across it in blue pencil—"Old."

"So are you," she answered by postal the same day.

"Do you think so?" he scribbled under a photo of himself that he sent to her.

"Not at all!" came the shy answer, after she had admired its good points.

"Are you?" Evidently this editor wanted to know things.

"What woman is?" was the enigmatic sentence on the postal.

"Prove it." This young editor was nothing if not insistent.

"Here 'tis." And the photographs of some literary girls are not half bad.

"Very fine," was as much as he dared say by postal.

"Same to you!" And the girl thought the queer matter closed.

"Why don't you write at length?"

"Can't."

"Why not?"

"Am otherwise engaged."

"To whom?"

"My future husband, you silly! My postals have given out. Good-bye!"

ANNA COSULICH.



PRUDENT HEIRS

THERE are some who, inheriting fortunes free,
Show closest discriminations,
And prune their genealogical tree
By cutting their poor relations.

DOROTHY DORR.



SWEET CONSOLATION

MRS. COBWIGGER—You must feel dreadful about having your bric-à-brac stolen.

MRS. PARVENUE—Yes, my dear, but I realize that it was the act of a kleptomaniac. I'd have felt awful if a common thief had taken it.

A TRICK OF THE TRADE

By Curtis Dunham

PEG WOFFINGTON, standing on the mantelpiece, dainty and graceful in her garb of bisque, seemed to be smiling at her congenial surroundings. Her standpoint suggested that of the prompter's box, with the stage set for the cozy interior scene of a rural play in the seventeenth century. "Down centre," within a yard of her, was a breakfast table invitingly laid for two, with unopened letters beside each plate. But Peg's eyes did not rest on this evidence that the curtain was about to rise. Her gaze was fixed on the charming country landscape visible between swinging windows, "back," which opened on a broad veranda cool with clinging vines. In all other respects the stage setting was appropriate, and while dainty bisque Peg continued to smile approvingly it only remained for the actors to make their entrance.

And when the heroine presently entered, "up L," the illusion was heightened rather than destroyed, though the landscape visible through the swinging windows was that of a valley in Westchester County at this present day, and the heroine the modest heiress of a deceased country clergyman. But she was absolute mistress of this bit of Elysium, and although she was only three months from school and had set foot within a playhouse just four times in her life, was she not bride of a month to Spencer Jordan, who had played *Romeo* to the world-famous *Juliet* of his cousin, Sylvia Grahame? And in his wooing of her had not Spencer declared that she was Nature's own ideal for the fair daughter of *Capulet*?

Moreover, had she not already, with encouraging results, opened communication through the mails with her new and famous relative, Sylvia Grahame, with a view to compelling the world to coincide with Spencer's rash admission of her gifts? She had never met Sylvia, but that great joy was now imminent, for recent advices had set forth that the actress had returned from her annual trip abroad and established herself in her Madison avenue apartment.

So the manner of Grace Jordan's entrance on this pleasing scene is so conventionally correct, according to the best stage traditions, that the smile of the bisque Peggy seems to grow still brighter in approval and admiration of her. She wears a flowing morning gown adorned at the breast with a bunch of yellow roses. She approaches the breakfast table with measured, graceful step, and standing by her chair, calls in clear tones, nicely modulated:

"*Romeo, Romeo!*"

Receiving no answer she glides to the swinging windows and repeats the summons.

"Perhaps he's in the garden," it is plain she is saying to herself as she raises her voice and calls once more.

There being still no answer she seats herself at the table, and while she opens her letters Peg on the mantelpiece distinctly hears her say:

"I know—Spencer's sulking. Until this morning he thought I was joking about going on the stage. Now he realizes the inevitable. What! I go on rusting in this country hole—I, with a favorite leading

man for a husband and 'the greatest *Juliet*' for a cousin? Absurd!"

Now her eye has caught the significance of the letter she has opened, and she reads aloud:

"Your income from various sources for the current year will amount to about \$4,500, provided the X, Y & Z does not pass its dividend—"

"The X, Y & Z had better not pass its dividend," comments the reader, in tragic tones, and continues:

"As to your expressed desire to sell your charming homestead, we earnestly beg that you will not think of such a thing.

"Your obedient servants,
"GETTEM & KEEPEM."

Whereupon Grace stamps her little foot under the table and remarks, with determination:

"But I *will* sell the farm. I *won't* go on raising chickens. I didn't marry an—an—incubator. Spencer's had his career, I'll have mine. He has played *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Sylvia Grahame; he shall play *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Grace Jordan. That's settled."

By this time she had opened another letter, which she reads aloud for the benefit of Peg:

"I don't want your farm, but I'll take it to oblige you. I'll give you \$9,000. It's worth twice that. You'll be sorry some day. Then I'll sell it back to you for \$12,000.

"YOUR UNCLE BILL.

"The wretch!" is Grace's comment. "But I'll take his \$9,000. It will pay for the scenery and costumes. Spencer has said that I realize his ideal of *Juliet*, and now he shall help me prove it to the world!"

Whereupon Grace rises and declares:

"Hist! Romeo, hist! O, for a falconer's voice,

To lure this tassel-gentle back again!"

There is an interruption of a nature somewhat disconcerting. Spencer enters through the swinging windows, looking as unlike the gallant *Monta-*

gue as possible. His shoes are dusty and there are straws clinging to his hair and clothing. His collar is guiltless of necktie, and there is a jagged rent in one coat sleeve. As he advances to his place at the breakfast table he remarks:

"Well, here's a pretty how-de-do. What do you think, Gracie? The speckled hen is trying to set again!"

"The speckled hen!" repeats Grace, in tones of deep contempt.

To which *Romeo* replies, with his mouth full:

"Yes. I caught her at it just now—out back of the barn. She doesn't seem to recognize our new incubator. But I gave her a bad half-hour. Chased her all over the yard. Told her plainly her business was to lay eggs, not to hatch 'em. Informed her that I'd be responsible for the hatching—apologized for not being able to attend to the laying, too. Argued with her about the sin of wasting her time keeping warm a lot of porcelain door knobs. Called her attention to the example of the little busy bee. But she didn't seem to take it in the right spirit. So I soused her well in the horse trough. She's the wettest hen you ever saw. Whew! but I'm angry. Hello! Anything wrong, Gracie?"

As Spencer pauses with his fork raised, regarding with alarm the tragic aspect of his young bride, Grace simply ejaculates, in tones to match, "The speckled hen!"

"Why, what's up, darling?"

"Spencer," says Grace, with evidences of genuine indignation, "I have been deceived. I fondly thought you had a soul—a soul above speckled hens. It's barely a month since we were married, and already you've settled down into a—a regular hayseed. You—y—you, who have played *Romeo*!" And she holds her handkerchief to her eyes.

There is but one thing for Spencer to do, and he does it. He takes Grace in his arms, strokes her fair hair and speaks from his heart in tones melting and mellow.

"Darling, forgive me. This new

life, after the tinsel and turmoil of the stage, seems like paradise to me. It is heaven—with your sweet eyes, your dear lips, your loving heart all my own. Last night I woke in terror, thinking it was all a dream, that I was back in the old, feverish, unsettled, unhappy pursuit of the bubble reputation. Just then you moved in your sleep, and the spectre vanished. You were my angel of peace. Darling, this sweet retreat that you have brought me is heaven's own setting for our love. In it you——”

But Grace pushes him away, though gently, resumes her place at the table and completes the sentence in her own wilful way:

“In it I am a simple little country girl, an innovation that has caught your passing fancy—along with—the speckled hen.”

“Gracie!”

But Spencer makes no further protest. He is opening a letter, and as he does so he smiles covertly at the discontented face opposite him, as if the letter had reminded him of well-laid plans now near fruition. Grace brightens, too.

“Is it from Cousin Sylvia, dear?” she asks.

“Yes, just a line saying we may expect her to-day.”

“Now that's too lovely! Does she say anything about the servant she promised to send us—her old servant, Gretchen? We need her terribly.”

“Yes, here it is,” and he reads:

“Gretchen has finally consented, though she has grave doubts about country life. She's quite spoiled, you know. For three years I haven't had a word to say about the management of my own flat. Gretchen knows all my affairs from beginning to end. She loves to gossip about ‘the profession.’ I hope Grace won't mind her familiar manners, in view of her excellent qualities as a servant. She can do everything. She should arrive soon after you get this letter. I will ride over on my wheel from Larchmont, arriving about noon.”

While Grace is dancing about in a state of ecstasy over these tidings Spencer rises from the table, winks

once solemnly at Peg, and joins Grace near the window. Just then she says, excitedly:

“Here she comes!”

“Who? Sylvia?”

“No, Gretchen.”

“By the front way, I'll bet.”

“Yes,” laughs Grace; “you'd better escape by the kitchen.”

“I will,” says Spencer; “I'll go and have a look at the pigs.” And he goes.

As Gretchen enters by way of the veranda, Grace perceives that she is all Sylvia Grahame has described her to be. She carries an umbrella and a large carpet bag, which she places on a chair, and announces herself:

“Compliments of Miss Gretchen Schmitsberger. Yes.”

“You come from my cousin, Sylvia Grahame?” asks Grace, determined to live up to the hints in Sylvia's letter.

“I introduced myself already just now. Yes. Also with compliments of Miss Sylvia Grahame, the greatest *Juliet* ever. Maybe this ain't the right place? What is your name?” All of which is remarked in the most placid tones.

“I am Mrs. Spencer Jordan,” says Grace. Whereupon Gretchen seizes her hand and shakes it.

“Yes. That was right. We talk business pretty quick, in a little while, maybe. Oh, my! it was warm by the road from the station.”

Grace cannot stifle the temptation to make one satirical retort.

“Pardon us for not sending the carriage,” she says.

“Oh, I excuse you,” says Gretchen, affably, taking a comfortable seat and removing a nondescript bonnet from her mass of yellow curls. “You was going somewhere? Yes?”

“No, I shall be at home all day.”

“Maybe you better sit down, then.”

Grace obeys mechanically. Gretchen crosses her knees comfortably, exhibiting a very flamboyant stocking, at which she observes Grace to be looking with some interest.

“Yes. It was a pretty stocking, ain't it?”

"Rather warm, I should think."

"Oh, not so warm," says Gretchen, with an impudent smile.

"I trust, Gretchen," says Grace, with dignity, "that you are not addicted to slang?"

"If it was slang, all right. I speak the words of the greatest *Juliet* ever."

"Do you want me to believe," says Grace, with indignation, "that Sylvia Grahame uses such vulgar expressions?"

"Oh, that was the way in our profession," answers Gretchen, complacently. "We peoples of the stage don't put on so many airs. Yes. We do what we like. We say what we please between ourselves off the stage. Sure. You speak about the stockings already. Sylvia Grahame gave them to me. Yes. One day they came—six pairs in a box—while we have a lunch party in the flat. The gentlemen open the box and make neckties of the stockings."

"Oh!" gasps Grace.

"Yes. But Sylvia won't have such actions. She puts on a pair——"

"Stop! stop!" says Grace, in horror. "Not right there before everybody?"

It was now Gretchen's turn to be dignified. She draws herself up stiffly and says:

"There was a limit, of course. The gentlemen turned their backs."

"Did Sylvia's husband consent to this—to this?" gasps Grace, unable to continue.

"Excuse me," says Gretchen, who appears to be startled. "You speak of the husband of the greatest *Juliet* ever?"

"Yes; surely he must have been offended at this—this——?"

"Oh," returns Gretchen, with a sniff, "we have no use for husbands."

"You mean that Sylvia's husband was not at home on the occasion of this extraordinary scene?"

"Oh, yes, he was home all right."

"And he was not indignant? He made no objection?"

"That was impossible. He know nothing about it."

"But you said just now he was at home."

"Sure. By his boarding-house in West Thirty-fourth street."

"Oh, dear!" sighs Grace. "Have they separated?"

"Separated?" demands Gretchen, open-eyed. "What for?"

"But it seems they don't live together."

"Oh, yes," says Gretchen, indifferently, "I guess they live together—sometimes when nobody was looking."

"Gretchen, this is awful! You know they're married."

Gretchen shakes her head dubiously while driving Grace distracted with the ready admission:

"Sure they was married all right."

"Goodness gracious! Then why doesn't he stay at home with Sylvia in her flat?"

"Oh, my!" ejaculates Gretchen, much shocked. "Oh, my, that was not respectable!"

"What!"

"Oh, my! What would people say?"

"What *could* people say?"

Whereupon Gretchen shakes her head slowly at Grace and says:

"I guess you ain't very well acquainted with our profession. Yes. In our profession if you have a husband, keep it quiet. Never speak about it."

"I shall be acquainted with your profession very soon," responds Grace, angrily. "Sylvia Grahame has promised to teach me. I shall have my own company. I shall have my husband with me always. He shall be my leading man. I shall be *Juliet* and he shall play *Romeo*."

"Oh, what a scandal!" says Gretchen, wringing her hands. "It will be in all the papers, with pictures. Yes. Oh, my!"

"Scandal?"

"Sure. *Juliet* with a husband! *Ach, himmel! Ach, what a scandal!*"

There are evidences that Grace is weakening. But she declaims for Gretchen some lines from the part of *Juliet*, and asserts that genius can overcome all—even the existence of a husband. Gretchen listens to the recitation, and says, doubtfully:

"Yes, that was good—except the feet."

"What is the matter with my feet?" demands Grace.

"I speak about the feet of the ladder."

"You mean that I must begin at the bottom of the ladder and climb up? Ordinarily that is the case, I admit. But where there is genius——"

"Oh, that makes no difference. Sylvia Grahame was in the 'Black Crook' already. Yes."

"Sylvia Grahame in the 'Black Crook!'"

"Sure. Also she was three years dancing in the Bowery."

"Oh," gasps Grace, sinking into a chair, "Spencer never told me."

"Of course, everybody knows all about it. When you are *Juliet* you must be everything else. Sure. You should see Sylvia Grahame stand on her head every morning for practice. Like this——"

"Stop! stop! Someone might come."

"All right. Can you do the kangaroo dance?"

"I never heard of it."

"Oh, that was sad. Every time you play *Juliet* you must dance it for an hour—to make the body soft. Yes. I will show you."

Gretchen dances with a simpering, lackadaisical expression and extravagant motion of the hands and arms, with uncouth leaps and bending of the body, while Grace watches her with growing disgust expressed in her features.

"Yes," says Gretchen, as the dance ends, "yes. You should see Sylvia Grahame do it."

"I have no desire to see Sylvia Grahame do it," responds Grace, in icy tones. "Perhaps now you will be good enough to come with me to the kitchen."

"Sure," says Gretchen, taking her umbrella and bag. "That was business."

"It is now nearly time for luncheon," says Grace, "and my husband——"

"Your husband!" says the startled

Gretchen, dropping her parasol. "Was he here also?"

"Certainly my husband is here."

"But he go away pretty quick? Yes?"

"He remains right here with his wife," says Grace, firmly, "where he belongs."

"Oh, my! What do the people say?"

"Will you come to the kitchen?" asks Grace, wearily.

"Excuse me," replies Gretchen. "Oh, my! A husband right here in the house all the time—before everybody! Oh, my! Excuse me. I go back to Sylvia Grahame. Yes."

"Very well," says Grace, coldly. "I will prepare lunch myself."

When Grace has disappeared in the direction of the kitchen Peg on the mantelpiece sees something that she feels almost carries her back to the days before she was turned into bisque. She sees Gretchen remove her bonnet, and with it her mass of yellow hair; sees her step out of her loose-fitting dress, take off her coarse cotton gloves, and stand revealed as Sylvia Grahame in a neat bicycle costume. She quickly places the articles of her disguise in the carpet bag, which she carries with the umbrella to the veranda and throws over the rail. Then she returns, waves her hand at smiling bisque Peg, and says:

"Ah, that's better than changing behind a hedge. Spencer will hide the stuff somewhere. But oh, what awful fibs I've been telling! They hit the mark, though, Peggy, my girl. You see if they didn't!"

Just here Grace enters from the kitchen, fumbling in her purse, and saying, without looking up:

"I forgot your fare back to the city, Gretchen. Here it is."

"How do you do, Cousin Grace?" says Sylvia. "Seeing your charming breakfast-room deserted I walked right in from the veranda."

"Cousin Sylvia!" ejaculates Grace, in confusion, all unconscious of the trick played on her.

They kiss perfunctorily, for Grace's

manner is not warmly hospitable. Overcoming her embarrassment she asks, coolly and pointedly:

"Your husband? Will he be here soon?"

"Oh," says Sylvia, with animation, "I can't have him following me about. Such a thing is fatal to one in my profession. I suppose he is at his boarding-house in West Thirty-fourth street." And she yawns.

It is evident to Peg on the mantelpiece that Grace says to herself: "Gretchen told the truth. There are the stockings, too!"

Then she says to Sylvia: "What a pretty cycling suit! But don't you find the stockings rather warm?"

"Oh, they're not so warm," laughs Sylvia, while Grace's countenance shows that she is thinking: "That settles it."

"Do you think Gretchen will do?" asks Sylvia, after an awkward pause.

"Gretchen refused to stay," replies Grace, in crisp tones, "when she discovered that I lived with my husband. She said it was not respectable."

"Trust Gretchen to know all the prejudices of my profession," says Sylvia. "But it is really too bad."

"Oh, I'll get along somehow," replies Grace, and she busies herself clearing up the breakfast dishes.

"Why bother about the dishes?" says Sylvia. "Suppose we go over the lines of *Juliet* while we wait Spencer's return. First, I'd like to see you in the kangaroo dance——"

"Excuse me," says Grace, coldly; "I've given up all that."

"What! With your ideal face and figure?"

"You will think me silly, I know," says Grace, wiping her eyes, "but I—i—love m—my hus—husband. I

couldn't bear to have him out of m—my sight."

"Oh, you'll get over all that," says Sylvia, cheerily.

"Never! never! I won't run the risk. I'll keep him right here—always!" And poor Grace falls to weeping over the dishes.

At this interesting juncture Spencer, his attire more disordered than ever, hatless and coatless, dashes into the room, carrying in his arms the speckled hen with a cord attached to her leg and trailing behind. He appears not to notice Sylvia, but bursts forth to Grace:

"Here's the culprit, Gracie. It's no use sousing her in the horse trough. Wetting is no good. She'd set on the bounding billows in mid-ocean. I never saw such a hen! When we go on the road, darling, I'm going to take her along—to break the monotony of Shakespeare—Hello, Sylvia! Anything wrong, Gracie?"

Then Peg on the mantelpiece smiles benignantly on the fitting end of the comedy. Grace throws herself into Spencer's arms—ignoring the speckled hen, which flops to the floor and makes her exit by way of the veranda—and says, through her tears:

"Forgive me, darling. I was wrong. I am not going to drag you back into the life you detest. We'll stay right here, darling, all our lives, with our great love and our simple joys——"

"And the speckled hen," adds Spencer.

"After all," says Sylvia to Peg, "I half believe the world has lost a great *Juliet*."

At which Peg Woffington smiles in her bright, bisque fashion, and the curtain descends.



COUNTING THE COST

"DID you ever go to a church fair?"

"Once."

"Lose anything?"

"My religion."

MR. POLTROON

A DELAYED SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE RUE MARBEUF

By Charles Stokes Wayne

THE name of the fellow first attracted my attention. I was made acquainted with him in the cozy little American café that a few years ago had an existence on the Rue de la Paix, and that was known as "Harry's Snuggery." I cannot recall now who it was that spoke the words of introduction, but on the instant my curiosity was aroused by the appellation, "Mr. Poltroon." He was a well-favored fellow, with an open, frank expression and a manner that was thoroughly winning, which caused me to wonder all the more how he came by such a curiously inappropriate name. Subsequent inquiry elicited the fact that Mr. Poltroon was one of the numerous army of Paris guides; and then I marveled all the more that a person could hold for long such a position with such a handicap. He was not an ignorant man; on the contrary, his conversation indicated that he possessed an excellent education and that he was, moreover, unusually bright and clever. Under the circumstances I could not understand why he did not change his name for something less suggestive.

It was fully a month after our first meeting that I ran across him again, in the same place. It was, I remember, a very warm evening in August, and after we had vainly endeavored to cool off with several well-iced brandies and sodas, Poltroon himself suggested that we might find a pleasanter atmosphere at the Jardin de Paris. I accepted the proposition gladly, and hailing a *fiacre*, we were

soon on our way to that gay resort in the shadow of the Palais de l'Industrie.

The concert, which is more in the nature of what we in America call a variety show, was nearly over when we arrived, and we took places in the rear of the rows of benches that face the stage, upon which, at the moment, a woman in short skirts and a bonnet twice the size of her body was warbling, with the accompaniment of many winks and a rather free display of belaced petticoats and other *lingerie*, a song of the most indelicate type. In the course of the song there occurred a bit of French slang with which I was not familiar, and when I turned to Poltroon to ask the meaning I found him so absorbed in watching someone a little further front, and just across the aisle from us, that he did not hear my question. When I repeated it I discovered that he had not been listening to the song at all, and having missed the connection, was unable to satisfy my curiosity.

To the fellow's credit I must add that he seemed very much annoyed at this, for while I had not engaged him in his official capacity as guide, I had paid for the *fiacre* and I had also paid a franc for his admission to the garden, and he seemed to feel that he was under certain obligations to me for these reasons. After a moment of hesitation he pointed out the woman at whom I fancied he had been gazing, and remarked *sotto voce* that he wished me to observe her closely.

She was not a young woman. I should say she was at least thirty-five,

perhaps forty. Her hair, of which she possessed an abundance, was a natural Titian red, and her complexion, at the distance, appeared about as nearly perfect as one could imagine. It was, however, her figure that I remarked most. There was something about it that was particularly stirring to the senses. She was tall and slender, and yet I do not remember ever to have seen more alluring lines. She reminded me of the Venus de' Medici clad in purple and fine linen. Through a filmy white stuff the flesh tints of her back, shoulders and arms showed clearly, and there was an indefinable charm in the way the bright copper-color of her hair coquetted with the dazzling milk-white of her perfect neck. Though she wore few jewels, there was an air of sumptuous richness about her that told me she was well cared for, and in the little, stout, black-bearded man that sat by her side I recognized a Hebrew banker whom I had met years before in Vienna, and who was reputed to be possessed of almost fabulous wealth.

Poltroon and I strolled about the garden together for a while after the performance ended, and just as a crowd had begun to gather round the band stand and dancing floor in the centre to witness the rather questionable exhibition of the paid quadrille dancers, he suggested that we sit down at one of the many little tables under the trees and have something to drink. Up to this moment he had seemed preoccupied and reticent. He had made no offer to explain why he wished me to notice the woman I have just described, but I judged from his manner that he not only knew something of her, but that she had once exercised an important influence over him. And in this, as subsequent events proved, I was not mistaken.

We each ordered a brandy and soda, and as Poltroon sipped the drink that was brought him his reserve gradually melted, and after a few preliminary observations on the curious temperament of women in general, he came to speak of the woman who at

that moment occupied the thoughts of us both.

"She is an American," he said, with, I thought, a just perceptible slur on the nationality, though he knew full well that I, too, was from across the sea. Of his own birthplace I was still ignorant, though I fancied he was English. "And she has a history," he added, "a most interesting history, I believe, though I have never heard all of it. However, I know enough to make an interesting little story, and it may interest you more than that business over there," wagging his head in the direction of the music and the dancers, from which shouts of merriment now reached us.

I expressed a desire to hear it, and Poltroon, after offering me a cigarette and lighting one himself, proceeded.

"What I know of her happened in Monte Carlo three years ago. There was a young American there with a nurse. We'll call the American Robinson—though that was not his name—and the nurse—well, his name doesn't matter. She was known then as Mrs. Rickshaw, and she was a damn sight more beautiful than she is now—she has aged a good deal in the last three years. Well, Robinson was a consumptive, a young fellow, sent to the Riviera for his health. He was worth a pot of money, and he carried a letter of credit for fifty thousand dollars. I think he knew Mrs. Rickshaw in the States, and I rather fancy she followed him out there. At all events, they were together at Monte Carlo, and the nurse, who wasn't half as strict as he should have been, winked at it all, and—what do you suppose? Why, the next thing he knew he was head over ears in love with Mrs. Rickshaw himself. Robinson was supposed to be at Mentone. There he drew his money and from there all his letters were posted home, but he was living at the Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo all the time, and spending his days at the Casino with that woman for his companion. I never saw such luck as the fellow had at the tables. He won day after day, and

the excitement kept him going. I don't think he had drawn a franc for months, and he had in ready cash something like four hundred thousand francs hidden away in his room as the result of his gaming."

As the fellow talked I watched him closely. He was very blond, with a small downy mustache, and the only fault in his almost perfect face was the smallness of his eyes, which he seemed to hold half-closed the better part of the time. They were, too, rather close together, which argued, I had been taught, cupidity, though I had never observed any indication of this during my brief acquaintance with him. Now, however, that he laid so much stress on the money question I began to suspect that his eyes did not contradict his character.

"The nurse," he continued, "was a poor man, as nurses usually are; and he began to fancy, after a while, that this woman, Mrs. Rickshaw, would prefer him if he had the money, and if Robinson were poor. Why, he asked himself, should she care for an invalid in preference to a hale, hearty fellow like himself, unless it was for the luxuries that the invalid could shower upon her? As time went on his passion grew. My God! what a terrible thing it is to get that bug in your brain! You can't think straight. You make yourself believe impossibilities. You exaggerate your ability and lessen the difficulties in your path. The nurse felt satisfied that if Robinson were out of the way, and Robinson's money his, Mrs. Rickshaw would be his also. She had certainly given him many an indication that he was not distasteful to her. And—have you ever thought how much an invalid is in the power of his nurse?"

He asked me the question and waited for an answer. I told him that I had never considered the subject.

"I have," he added; "and what surprises me is that we don't hear of more instances of misplaced confidence in that direction. Why, it was the easiest thing in the world for that nurse to——"

He hesitated, and then, for the first time, I began to suspect something. My suspicions, however, were very vague at first, and I chided myself, mentally, for permitting them to get anything like a foothold.

"Let us have another brandy and soda," he said. And until the drinks were brought he was silent, simply lighting another cigarette and regarding the lighted end from time to time in a fit of seeming abstraction.

"Well," I said at last, "what happened?"

"Oh, yes," he went on; "I beg your pardon, but my thoughts were wandering. There's not very much more of it. The nurse—that is to say, Robinson was found dead in his bed one morning. He had died of hemorrhage in the night. There were all the evidences of it—blood on his lips, blood on the sheet and pillows; and when it was all ended and the body shipped back to America, what do you suppose? It was found that he had been losing heavily at the Casino. Every centime had been drawn on his letter of credit. Not over fifty francs were discovered in his room. And the nurse—well, the nurse was not looking for a new berth just then. On the contrary, he was following Mrs. Rickshaw, who had instantly disappeared. He found her, I believe, in Lucerne, and if I know the story, he made violent love to her. The nurse was well provided with funds. He gave her very handsome presents. The diamonds with which he presented her might have been bought by a prince of the blood royal. And then—Mrs. Rickshaw suspected. She not only suspected, but she accused, and she not only accused, but she wheedled out a confession. Even then she was not satisfied. She asked proofs; and when she had proofs—oh, the rest of the story is easy. She simply wished that miserable nurse to buy her silence. The nurse bought it, and when he had paid the price Mrs. Rickshaw was worth twelve thousand pounds sterling and the nurse was a pauper. His passion had maddened him, made a fool of him,

and she—well, I shall never forget how she laughed!”

He stopped suddenly and looked at me with an odd expression of distrust in his eyes. I pretended not to notice the last exclamation or his expression, and I saw that my pretense had its effect.

“Mrs. Rickshaw disappeared the next day. He tried to follow her, but he lost all trace, and from that time until—until one night he happened to see her here in the Jardin de Paris, he never set eyes on her.”

“And what did he do then?” I asked, with as much nonchalance as I could assume.

Poltroon appeared to be somewhat taken aback by my question. He stared at me in a dazed sort of way, and then in his little eyes I noticed an angry glitter that spoke of vengeance unwrought.

“What did he do?” he repeated at last, with a determined ring in his voice. “What did he do? He followed her to her home and—” he caught his breath suddenly, and the last two words were hissed through his teeth—“*killed her!*”

I stared at the man now in undisguised amazement.

“Killed her!” I exclaimed. “What do you mean? Why, I am sure she is not dead. I saw her, and you saw her, not half an hour ago, with old Rosenbaum, the Vienna banker.”

He laughed with a wild, weird, ghastly merriment.

“She is a dead woman, I tell you,” he went on; “dead as the Pharaohs.”

And then, draining his glass, he rose to his feet.

The dancing about the band stand was over, and a crowd surged by us, moving toward the gates. I turned to pick up my hat, which was lying on the table; and when I had placed it on my head, and stood up, I missed Poltroon from my side. He had disappeared in the throng, and I never saw him again.

All Paris was ringing next day with what the newspapers chose to style “The Mystery of the Rue Marbeuf.” A certain “Madame Reecksha,” as they put it, had been strangled in her apartments at dawn, supposedly by a burglar, of whom the authorities had been able to discover no trace whatever.

In the mail that was handed to me that evening by the *portier* at my hotel was a square envelope, addressed in a nervous hand. Intuition told me that it was from Poltroon, and investigation proved that intuition was correct.

“To-morrow,” he wrote, “they will find my body floating in the Seine. If you come to the Morgue you may identify me; but the world will not bother over a Poltroon’s departure—it will be too busy speculating over the death of the woman that made him what he was.”

I did not go to the Morgue; and I never before volunteered to solve the “Mystery of the Rue Marbeuf,” which I could, you see, so easily have done.



FROM ASPIRING ADHERENTS

“WE are thinking,” remarked the perennial office-seeker, importantly, as he strolled into the flower emporium, “of presenting a floral piece to the new representative of this district. Something appropriate, you know. What would you suggest?”

“H’m, let me see,” reflected the florist, thoughtfully. “How would a pillow of forget-me-nots do?”

TO EVERY MAN A DAMSEL OR TWO

By R. W. St. Hill

"I AM sorry," she said, with gentle firmness, "but it can never be as you wish—really it can't!"

"But I don't want you to love me, you know," he interrupted. "I——"

She turned quickly.

"Don't you? Why not?" She seemed a little disconcerted.

"No; I only want you to let me love you. You see, you are just the sort of woman I should like to love; and it needn't worry you a bit. You aren't called on to do anything at all, except make me love you. Don't you think that's easy?"

She had watched his face as he spoke, but when he turned his eyes in thoughtful question from the ash of his cigar to her, reclining gracefully on the couch, she looked away with a little frown.

Of course she meant to make him love her; she always had. Equally, of course, she had no intention of loving him. But somehow she did not like his quiet elimination of herself from all part save that of a lay figure. He said plainly he did not care whether she loved him or not, and he seemed to mean it.

"I think your experiment would not amuse me much," she said, a little coldly. "But I am glad you understand my feelings. Poor boy!" She looked up at him with affected pity, for somehow she felt vexed. "It's better to be outspoken; it may save you worse pain later."

He came and stood over the couch, holding her with a steady gaze.

"Don't talk about it any more," she said. "I mean it—I do, really."

He was kneeling beside her before she was conscious of the movement.

"Very well; we'll forget all about it." He took her hand in his so gently that she was conscious only that the warm grasp was rather comforting, rather pleasant.

"Yes," she said, "it's silly, really it is, and quite hopeless."

His eyes were still fixed on hers, and she was so amused at their earnestness that she lay there watching.

"Quite hopeless?" he repeated.

Hazily she thought that perhaps that was an arm stealing round her waist; but then again she was not quite sure, and it would seem foolish to make a fuss about nothing.

"Yes," she said, mechanically; "quite hopeless!"

She was sure of that arm now, but she felt she ought to have spoken about it sooner. It would look as if she must have known it was there all the time, and besides . . .

"Couldn't I *ever* make you love me?"

His face bent down to hers too tenderly for her to resent the form of his question. Besides, he amused her.

"It's hopeless," she murmured; "really it is."

"Maud!" he whispered, passionately.

And the sweet appeal would probably have worked like a charm if Maud had not been the name of her sister.



AMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS

JENNIE—I don't fancy that fat fellow; I'd like to sit on him.
JIMMIE—Well, you'd find considerable seating capacity.

A ROSE WHISPERS

I AM the flower within her garden-close
 She cast aside;
 Ah, had she plucked me, verily God knows
 I had not died.

I would have fought a battle with strong Death,
 And bloomed anew,
 Finding sweet resurrection in her breath
 The long day through.

And had she laid me on her trembling heart,
 New fire had sprung
 Into my crimson petals' every part,
 And made me young.

Yea, I for her had lived again; but oh,
 She passed me by;
 And now, neglected, in the night I go
 Softly—to die!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.



WELL-GROUNDED APPREHENSION

JUDDOCK—Hold up a minute, old man; I want to speak to you about that—

HADDOCK—Haven't time. I've got to catch this next train for Sandswamp-by-the-Sea.

JUDDOCK—Why, what's going on?

HADDOCK—My wife's sick—terribly sick.

JUDDOCK—That's too bad, old chap, too bad. Nothing dangerous, I hope?

HADDOCK—I don't know yet. I can't imagine what it can be. She was all right when she left for there a couple of days ago. But it's serious enough to confine her to her bed, anyway.

JUDDOCK—But didn't your communication say?

HADDOCK—I haven't had any.

JUDDOCK—How do you know she's so sick, then?

HADDOCK—She hasn't telegraphed for anything she forgot.

ALEX. RICKETTS.



HER RECKLESS PASSION

REBECCA—Vasn't dat a nice luf ledder I wrote you, Ikey tear?

IKEY—Yes, Beccy; but make it shorter negst dime. I had to bay two cents due bostage on dat ledder.